SENSATIONAL FRENCH NOVELS

THE GOLDEN PIG

F. Du Boisgobey.

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THE GOLDEN PIG.

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DU BOISGOBEY'S SENSATIONAL NOVELS.

THE GOLDEN PIG.

By FORTUNÉ DU BOISGOBEY.

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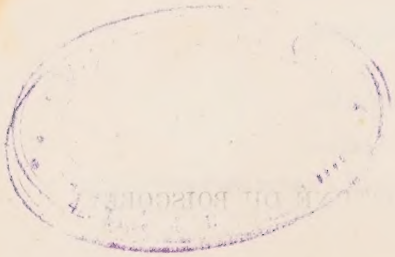

THE GOLDEN PIG;

OR,

THE IDOL OF MODERN PARIS.

PART I.

I.

"So it's settled, Savinien, my boy, you're going home to bed?"

"Why yes, my dear George. We are the only fellows left on the boulevard. It is four in the morning, and I'm used-up. Remember that I spent last night in a railway train, and, thanks to you, I have been making a wild night of this one.

"You're not used to it, but you will be by-and-by."

"I shan't aim at that. My uncle didn't send me to Paris to conduct myself in this manner."

"Your uncle is a hundred years behind the times. Such is the natural consequence of a lifetime of summers spent in a château at Dôl and of winters passed at Saint Malo. Your old fogey of a relative had a brilliant idea when he thought of giving you a six-months' holiday to get the stiffness out of your joints. This happy thought of his affords me the felicity of showing you the lions. How did it come into his head?"

"He is far from being as much behind the times as you imagine, for he thinks that a man should see something of life before settling down and marrying. He says that ships were made to sail and men to travel. He was a sailor once, you know."

"Yes, thirty years ago, when he was young; but now he is one no longer, and he plants his cabbages like any other good gentleman-farmer. If a similar inviting future awaits you I foresee how it will all end. In six months' time you will return to the manor of Plouër with a few thousand francs of debts behind you; your uncle will pay them—after your repentance in sackcloth and ashes—and in the spring you will marry your cousin Yvonne. You will have a large family, and will end your days between two sporting dogs, who are unchained every morning to run down a solitary hare, and two broken-down mares which you will hitch to your crazy coach to drive off and visit all the yokels in the neighbourhood."

"Well, I should not be an object of pity, as Yvonne is charming."

"Is she as pretty as Anita?"

"The girl who took supper with us? Oh, my cousin does not resemble her in the least, thank goodness!"

"Good! You are in love with her, or think you are. You'll get over it, for I hope that you'll make the best of your time in the 'modern Babylon.' I'll bet that at Plouër Paris is always qualified as 'the Great Babylon.'"

"The peasants are not so bad as that; they say, 'the capital.'"

"It comes to the same thing. Those people are mere fossils, and it is utterly impossible that you, Savinien d'Amaulis, should resign yourself to being buried alive with them in the very 'flower of your youth.' When a man has a fine-sounding name like D'Amaulis, just fit for the hero of a novel, and is a viscount to boot—which you are, if I am not mistaken——'

"And you are not," interrupted Savinien, laughing. "The Amaulis have been titled and hard up for at least four centuries back. Now, a penniless viscount doesn't amount to much nowadays."

"So poor as that! Why, I thought that your father left you an estate.'

"Yes, and it brings me in six thousand six hundred francs a year without counting the stock; twenty brace of fowls, and I don't know how many pots of salt butter."

"I hadn't as much as that when I came here, and yet I continue to live, and live well."

"Oh, you know how to make money."

"And why shouldn't you learn how?"

"Because I have never been taught."

"I'll teach you, if you like. When we both finished studying law in '75 at the Rennes faculty, I didn't imagine that I should soon play a part in a city where millions are lying idle. My mother pinched herself to allow me fifty crowns a month, and what she left when she died did not enrich me. All the same, I have a foothold in Paris. Doesn't my life here seem to you a pleasant one? This evening at six, you fell like a bomb into my apartments in the Rue d'Antin. You threw yourself into my arms by way of proving that you hadn't forgotten your schoolfellow, George Fougeray, here present, and I was delighted to find that you remembered me. At seven I took you to the Café Anglais. Was the dinner good?"

"Excellent. The cooking seemed to me delicious, and the wines exceptionally fine. Uncle Trémorin, who knows all about wines, would have said the same."

"Your uncle never drank such wine as that, I'm sure. After dinner I took you to the Variétés Theatre, and, as it was a first performance, our seats cost five louis, being stalls. I had two and gave you one."

"Which I shouldn't have accepted had I known what it cost you."

"That isn't the question. Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Immensely. The play was amusing, the actresses pretty——"

"Not all of them. But those who supped with us were very stylish. They are among the prominent ones."

"That was easy to see. They blazed with diamonds."

"And they were neither prosy nor affected, which is still more often the case. Anita is extremely taking."

"She made me laugh till I cried."

"And she wishes to show you her house in the Rue de Madrid. We will go there to-morrow, and you shall see in what style she lives. Now, what do you think of the men to whom I introduced you? A stockbroker's partner, an *attaché* of a foreign embassy, a Russian nobleman, an editor——"

"That one was witty."

"If the others were not, you will at least admit that their manners were good."

"I was delighted to make their acquaintance."

"It only depends upon yourself to become intimate with them, as they liked you very much. But let me resume my summing up of the pleasures of our evening. After supper we played cards——"

"And in three quarters of an hour you had won three hundred louis—just my yearly income."

"And you, who played with praiseworthy timidity, won a thousand francs."

"Very nearly. I am still amazed at it. Such a thing never happened to me before. At home when we play whist we only stake half-penny points each. My cousin Yvonne's present must have brought me good luck."

"What present? That little golden pig hanging from your watch-chain? Did Mademoiselle de Tremorin give you that? That Breton Agnes must know what a fetish is, then?"

"No. The good pig was given me by my aunt, who saw in the papers that such ornaments were in fashion. Yvonne's gift is a medal of the Virgin, one that was blessed at Jerusalem. When I left home, I promised to wear it always."

"Upon your heart? This is touching, indeed! I return to my summing up and its result. You saw what an evening we had of it?"

"Delicious! I never enjoyed anything so much."

"Well, my dear fellow, I have the same pleasure every evening, and so may you if you choose."

"The deuce I may! I ask no better, but my uncle manages my affairs, and has merely opened me a credit of six thousand francs, which must last for the term of my stay here. Now, at the rate at which you live, I couldn't hold out six weeks, much less six months."

"When you require any money I will lend it to you."

"Thanks. I prefer not to run into debt."

"You are right. Your uncle might scold you," replied George Fougeray, in an ironical tone. "Well, I will teach you the art of making a hundred thousand francs a year with bright ideas, such ideas as often come to me."

"I am sure that they will never enter *my* head."

"You will see that they will come to you. They are in the Paris air. When you are acclimated you will catch them flying. Meantime, we'll breakfast together to-morrow."

"But my morning is taken up. I must first go to my uncle's banker, to whom I have a letter of introduction, and after that I have to call on three relations of ours in the Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"Good! Still you can come for an hour to Tortoni's. I shall be there at noon. But here is your street, and you must be half dead with sleep, or at Plouër you go to bed with the chickens, I presume. There! go to bed, my dear boy, and pleasant dreams to you!"

This conversation, begun in the Avenue de l'Opéra, had brought the two friends to the corner of the Rue du Helder, and Savinien d'Amaulis was but fifty paces from the hotel where he had put up on arriving in Paris. He could scarcely keep awake from weariness, but still he had no desire to sleep, for all that had been said to him was whirling through his brain, and he longed to be alone to think it over.

A young man of twenty-four, who has never left his own province, cannot suddenly enter the whirlpool of Parisian life without being over-excited by the change. Savinien had always lived with his uncle Trémorin—an uncle on his mother's side—who had been a careful guardian to him. Three years' residence at Rennes as a law student; three years, during which he had frequently run back to the old château at Plouer; two journeys to Paris with the above-mentioned uncle, who had gone there to see the races, made up the amount of variety that had previously occurred in the life of the Viscount d'Amaulis, who had, however, turned this little to good account. His student's life had expanded his mind; short as had been his two trips to Paris, they had opened a new world and a vast horizon to him, which Brittany had given no hint of, and he was glad once more to find himself in the capital, free, and well provided with means to enjoy his liberty.

He warmly pressed George Fougeray's extended hand, and left him to enter the hotel. Ten minutes later, carrying the candle, which a waiter whom he had abruptly aroused had given him, he entered the apartments which he had engaged the evening before, two communicating rooms looking into a courtyard, and situated on the third floor.

These rooms were not so convenient as the vast chamber which he had occupied at Plouer, but they were more comfortably furnished, for the owner of the château did not believe in modern furniture. A good Voltaire arm-chair opened its arms to Savinien, and he had only to light the wood which a careful attendant had set ready in the chimney place.

This he did, for it was April and the nights were cold. He slipped on a dressing-gown, made as they make them in Brittany; he thrust his feet into slippers, which a Paris dandy would have pitched out of the window, although the snowy hands of cousin Yvonne had wrought them, for they were in worsted-work: he lighted a cigar, and gave himself up to a pleasant reverie before the fire.

Suddenly, however, a strange noise startled him. This noise, which Savinien would not have remarked in the daytime, was very distinct in the profound silence of the night. As previously mentioned, the apartment looked out upon the courtyard of the hotel, and the distant rumbling of late vehicles passing over the boulevard did not reach it. But in Paris walls are thin, and, moreover, when any one walks overhead, the occupant of the room below catches the sound of every footstep.

Now some one was walking on the fourth floor directly over Savinien d'Amaulis' head. The footsteps were hasty, and those of a man wearing heavy big-heeled boots.

This, in truth, was nothing out of the way. The traveller in this room had as much right as the third floor tenant to come home at four in the morning, and to walk about his room before going to bed, instead of peaceably warming himself before the fire.

But he did not content himself with going and coming. He often interrupted this exercise; and every time he stopped, one heard a kind of dull knocking, which sounded as though from a hammer. The individual in question seemed to be nailing up something—a chest, it might be; for the tool he was using did not shake the ceiling, in fact, the blows he dealt were deadened by some intermediate object.

The time was strangely chosen for such work as this. Strangers dropping in at a hotel are not usually in the habit of attending to such matters for themselves. "That gentleman seems to think that nothing is well done

but what he does himself," thought George Fougeray's friend. "He must certainly be going off by an early train; he wants to be ready at the very minute. Perhaps he thinks that it is hardly worth his while to get a porter to fasten his boxes. I should not do what he does, though my uncle has always preached to me about economy. But trunks usually have locks or snaps. In what sort of a box can this eccentric individual have placed his luggage?"

Meanwhile the knocks continued, with regular intervals between them. It was easy to count the nails that were being driven in.

The intermittent sound awoke a gloomy remembrance in the mind of Savinien d'Amaulis. There is the memory of the eye, but there is also that of the ear, not to mention that of the heart. Now the poor fellow remembered how, one day, in the old house where he had lived at Saint-Malo, he had heard just such a knocking above his head. His father had died, and the coffin was being closed.

Savinien was twelve years old at the time. He had lost his mother almost at his birth, and when he escorted his father's remains to the grave, no one remained to him in all the world but the younger brother of his mother, whom he had scarcely known. The sad day which had made him an orphan was a well-remembered date in his life, and it is not surprising that he had never forgotten it. But how had the night-sounds to which he listened suggested to him a resemblance to the most painful period of his child-life? The idea was perhaps due to over-excited nerves, and he did not long attempt to seek for the cause of the perturbation which he experienced.

The noise continued for a few moments longer, but ceased at last, and the busy traveller, who preferred using his own hands to paying a workman, also abandoned his walking up and down. Having apparently nothing more to nail up, he had thrown himself upon his bed to rest till it was time to start, and Savinien ceased to think of him.

His thoughts returned to the varied things which had filled his mind on his first evening in Paris. He once more saw the auditorium of the Variétés Theatre blazing with light, the diamonds sparkling on snowy shoulders, the actresses showing off their airs and graces upon the stage. The joyous strains of the operetta sounded in his ears, and it seemed to him that he still heard his friend George Fougeray, the man about town, telling him the names of the celebrated persons of both sexes who were to be met at all first performances—academicians and "swells," members of the highest aristocracy and notorious irregulars. All these sparkling faces passed before Savinien's eyes, though they were half closed, and he thought that the strangers smiled, as if to say, "You are one of us."

Then had come the supper at the cafe; the thousand lights of the candles reflected in the crystal on the snowy cloth; the table laden with flowers; the costly wines lying in baskets or standing in silver ice pails. And the chatting of the men—mocking, ironical, and sneering, full of rapid transition and fashionable jargon. These fellows knew everything, talked of everything, and despised everything.

Meanwhile the women chatted in the bold language of the green-room, summing up, in some dry sentence as rapid as ciphering, the value of their lovers, serious or otherwise; "chaffing" aristocratic ladies, and accusing them of copying their dresses and manners. Then there was the card-playing, the sharp click of the gold, the rustling of the bank notes carelessly crumpled up, the unexpected throws which filled or emptied in a second

hands full of louis, with cries of surprise, joy, or anger, noise, passion, and fever. Savinien d'Amaulis had "lived" more in the three hours he had spent in a fashionable restaurant than in the three last years he had passed in the feudal halls of the manor of Plouër.

The face of George Fougeray stood out in bold relief on the picture called up by the imagination of the penniless viscount; George Fougeray, whom he had known as a poor student at Rennes, and whom he found transformed into an opulent high-liver, appreciated, sought after, the master of his present and sure of his future, satisfied with himself, and indeed overflowing with self confidence.

Savinien repeated to himself his last words of advice: "Do as *I do*." Thus had spoken this fortunate individual. "Dare, and Paris is yours." And Savinien longed to dare.

He was, none the less, the last of a race of noblemen who for four hundred years had transmitted from father to son the holy virtues of proud poverty. He had been taught in his childhood that honour is everything in life, and that one must live honestly to die happily. Brought up by the rector of his parish, under the eyes of his uncle Trémorin, who was a man of firm, old-fashioned morality, he had never learned to worship money, and the echoes of Parisian bacchanalia had never disturbed his robust youthful liberty. The only newspapers taken in at Plouër were those devout Legitimist prints the *Gazette de France* and the *Union*, neither of which he read, and indeed till he was sixteen years old he had thought of no other pleasure save riding and hunting.

Later on, while he was studying law at Rennes, he had perceived that his comrades amused themselves in a less rustic style, but he had never been tempted to imitate them. There is hard drinking in the old capital of the duchy of Brittany, and young men there are not very fastidious as to the companions they choose among the other sex. Now, debauchery was not to the taste of Savinien, and he did not admire barmaids. The fair ladies whom he met on the beach of fashionable Dinard pleased him far more, but they intimidated him, although more than one had encouraged him to plunge into the cosmopolitan set which frequents watering-places and summer resorts, that class of society which, when the season is over, disappears, as Alfred de Musset says, "without touching earth with its feet."

The youthful Viscount d'Amaulis seemed to have been born expressly to succeed in such society. Instead of being short, squat, and somewhat heavy, like so many Bretons, he was tall and slight; his features, instead of seeming to be *hacked out*, had a delicacy which would have sufficed to distinguish him among a thousand fellow Bretons, even had he worn, like the peasants about him, a goatskin and a broad-brimmed soft felt hat.

He probably inherited his personal advantages from his mother, a Parisian of good family, whom his father had married without a portion; she had endowed him also with a frank, gay spirit, an easy, somewhat weak disposition, a decided taste for art, luxury, and elegance; all of which is wanting to the descendants of the Druids. Like them, however, he was brave, sincere, full of feeling, and ever inspired by duty. His uncle had great trouble to prevent him, when but thirteen years old, from following the Ille-et-Vilaine soldiers when they started to defend Paris against the Germans.

From all these contrasting traits it had resulted that Savinien had

accepted without any great regret the prospect of a country gentleman's life, although he often aspired to a less monotonous and more exciting existence.

It must be said that he had not finally accepted this provincial career until he had discovered that his cousin Yvonne was charming. He was six years older than she, and she had always seemed a mere child to him. But one fine day, when she reached sixteen, she had expanded like a heather-bell, and Savinien had fallen unwittingly in love. At a later day he knew that Yvonne adored him. M. de Tremorin approved of their love, which would end in marriage, and Savinien had speedily become accustomed to the idea of marrying his cousin as soon as he should reach his majority. But a year was lacking, and this last twelvemonth Savinien would willingly have spent at the chateau with his betrothed.

But his uncle, towards the end of the winter, had advised him to stay in Paris during the six months of celibacy which yet remained to him. This advice resembled an order. M. de Tremorin had, in a rambling way, explained why he wished his future son-in-law to remain six months away; he had given various paltry reasons; but Savinien, who understood him, knew what to think. It was a test. Uncle Tremorin had very stubborn ideas on all subjects. He thought that a young man, who had always been at home, and who had seen nothing, or but little of life, was a fair prey so long as his wild oats remained unsown; that the passions which sleep unknown, must sooner or later break forth, and that it was better this should occur before than after marriage.

"I had made ten sea-voyages when I left the service to marry your aunt," said he to Savinien; "and once married, I never again wished to leave Plouec. Six months on the boulevards are worth three voyages round the world. So go to Paris, and if you return in the autumn without shipwreck, you shall marry your cousin before Christmas."

Yvonne wept bitterly, but as her father remained firm Savinien started off, vowing that his thoughts would always be with her, and that he would write to her every day. Within twenty-four hours after arriving he had already broken his vow, for he had failed to write, and it was not of his cousin that he was thinking, as he sat dreaming before the fire in the hotel room. Daylight was beginning to dawn, and yet the Parisian puppets still danced before his eyes, whose eyes were closing sleepily.

Savinien thought of shaking off the torpor which held him to his arm-chair, and of setting himself bravely down to write the letter looked for in Brittany with so much impatience. Then he thought how long the day was likely to be, and that before the last post he should certainly find time to fulfil the promise he had broken the day before. So he stayed before the fire.

He had a further excuse for putting off the accomplishment of his duty till another time - that he was not in a fit state to pen anything. It would be better to write after resting than to scrawl a few commonplace words upon paper. Yvonne knew how to read "between the lines," and would certainly have found out that her dear cousin had changed. His brain was full of images too Parisian in character, and his style of writing would have shown the agitation that remained to him after cards and supper. In order to recover his clearness of mind, and to be sure of returning to the true provincial strain, he needed first to make a few serious visits, as he intended doing in the morning.

Moreover, there was but one postal delivery at Plouec every day. The

rural postman arrived at noon, and when her betrothed was absent Yvonne always went to meet him at the end of the avenue near the château. Savinien pictured her figure flitting under the tall oaks, his letter in her hand, that letter which must always be addressed to uncle Trémorin, and which she dared not unseal without her father's permission, though she always longed to do so. "She will be very much pleased to-morrow," he muttered, as his eyes closed. "I will send her four long pages after breakfast."

This praiseworthy resolution quieted his mind, and he thought only of rest. It would have been wise to have gone to bed, and indeed he thought of so doing, but day had now dawned, and the clock on the mantel-piece struck five.

Savinien said to himself that if he went to bed he would run a great risk of sleeping till noon, too late an hour to present himself at the banker's on whom his uncle wished him to call, and so he decided to sleep sitting until it was time to take a bath and rid himself of the drowsiness of so disturbed a night.

Vehicles were already rumbling along the street, the servants of the hotel were setting about their duties, and the porter had opened the courtyard gates. All these sounds reached Savinien, who was scarcely yet half asleep, and kept him from anything like real slumber. He even heard a vehicle stop, a waiter cross the courtyard, mount the stairs, and knock at the door of the room on the floor overhead.

The person whom he called could not have undressed, for his big-heeled boots immediately resounded on the floor of his apartment. He opened his door and entered into conversation with the man who had come to take his boxes. Then there was coming and going for ten minutes or so, and the staircase creaked under the footsteps of a heavily laden porter.

"That must be the chest which that fellow was nailing up last night," thought poor Savinien, whom the noise still disturbed. "If he had stayed here I should have left to-day for fear of having my head split by his abominable hammering. What the deuce can the fellow have put into his chest that it nearly breaks the back of a porter used to carrying trunks?"

And, as he was almost awake, and had no hope of falling asleep until the noise ceased, he rose and looked through the window facing the courtyard, and had the satisfaction of seeing a stout servant carrying an enormous black wooden chest—a chest as long as it was broad, with iron handles on each side, and a strip of card, upon which, no doubt, figured the address to which the box was to be sent.

The traveller who was going away followed the waiter, step by step, and appeared to watch carefully over his chest, which must have contained objects of great value, since he did not lose sight of it for a moment. The individual in question wore an otter cap, together with a long furred overcoat. His boots also were edged with fur. He looked as though he were about to start for the North Pole.

Savinien, who saw him from behind observed that he was tall, and so strongly built that he might have carried his own chest; however, the young fellow did not catch sight of the countenance of this singular personage.

"He has the figure and dress of the Russian giant who was exhibited last year at the fair at Rennes," the young Breton said to himself, rubbing his eyes. "I shall, for curiosity's sake, inquire what is the nationality of

this singular fellow, and what is his name. The landlord will tell me. But off he goes, and the best thing I can do now is to try to sleep. I hope that the lodgers and servants will leave me in peace, and so that their tramping up and down may not rouse me I will slip into my bedroom, which is further from the staircase than this little parlour, and stretch myself on the bed without undressing."

He acted in accordance with his words, and this time, with the help of a horizontal position, he did not fail to sleep soundly, though not without recollections of the game of cards and the gold raining down upon the green cloth of the table. This merry music soothed him to dreamy slumber.

Gamblers have dreams as well as heroes of tragedy, and these naturally relate to the life they lead. It is the same with all kinds of people. Racine tells us that Athalia saw Jezebel her mother: "As on her day of death most gorgeously arrayed."

Now, gamblers always dream of piles of gold, but Savinien d'Amaulis' visions were of a more complicated kind. He dreamed, to begin with, that he was a child, seated at his aunt Trémorin's feet, and that she held a Royaumont edition of the Bible upon her knees, a huge folio, in which she had long ago taught him to read. This Bible was illustrated on every page, and where she held it open one perceived a large picture of the Hebrews worshipping the Golden Calf. Presently the idolaters seemed to expand and become alive. In the distance a rocky mountain, dark and steep, appeared. At the foot of this Mount Sinai, under a fiery sky, there was a crowd of people, a motley group of men and women, dancing round an image displayed upon a lofty pedestal, while from above the burning sun of Arabia poured down its rays, making the idol glitter in the most dazzling manner.

Savinien recognised, one after another, the frenzied beings who led this weird and frantic dance. The men resembled the players who had taken part in that game at which he had won a thousand francs; the women were like the actresses who had supped at the restaurant where the wines had almost intoxicated the viscount.

It seemed to him, however, that the Golden Calf which overtopped the dancers was gradually undergoing a change; its muzzle lengthened, its horns became pointed ears and its tail began to twist in corkscrew fashion. The idol used by the Israelites indeed took the shape of a pig, that of the little golden pig which the last of the Amaulis wore on his watch-chain, And all the high-livers and fast women prostrated themselves before this image, which was typical of the only gods they worshipped, gold and luck.

Far away from the frenzied bacchanalian festival, quite in the background of the picture, a young girl knelt with clasped hands and her eyes raised to Heaven. At first Savinien could scarcely discern her form, lost in grey clouds. It was but a vague shadow, indistinct and wavering. But gradually the outlines became clearer, the features of the face more distinct. This maiden, praying to the true God for the enlightenment of the idolaters, was Yvonne.

Savinien uttered a cry and stretched out his arms to her, but only succeeded in striking the partition near his bed. Then his dream underwent a change.

The sweet face of his cousin had already vanished, but the slaves of gold were still dancing. The sun was clouded, however; great black masses of vapour came down the mountain side; thunder rolled in the

distance, and its rumblings, sounding afar off, reminded Savinien of the tramping in the hall which he had heard before he had fallen asleep.

The dream was becoming tragical, but Savinien asked himself whether it was indeed a dream, or if some one was mounting the stairs in great haste? The young fellow was indeed in that strange state which is neither sleep nor wakefulness—that mixed condition in which the mind conjures up phantoms while the body still experiences real sensations.

This uncertainty is never of long duration; after a few moments' hesitation the sleeper either enters into full possession of his physical faculties, or else his spirit passes entirely into the land of dreams. This time the soul won the mastery.

Yvonne's cousin again began to see the vision which a passing sound had interrupted. He heard nothing more, but imagined strange things. The idol was still there, monstrous and motionless. Its vile worshippers still frolicked around its pedestal.

Frightful flashes of lightning darted though the clouds, illuminating the scene with a sinister glare; blueish flames crept up from the cleft soil; gigantic shadows crossed the horizon, which was as red as blood.

The scene presented to his mind's eye seemed like some picture by Martin, the English painter, who has depicted the "Last Judgment," and "Belshazzar's Feast."

Then a huge face seemed to peer forth from amid the darkness, the face of Moses holding the tablets of the law. It was, indeed, the divine legislator of the Hebrews, such as Michael Angelo has sculptured him at St. Peter's in Rome. It was Moses in threatening and terrible anger. His eyes blazed, his face seemed all aflame. He slowly descended the steep mountain side which he had ascended in obedience to Jehovah, and at each step he took towards his rebellious people he seemed to swell in size.

And, strange to relate, with his long beard, his bristling hair, his severe features, he looked like uncle Trémorin, even as the virgin who had remained faithful to the worship of the true God had had the same sweet face as Yvonne. Savinien was persecuted in his dream by resemblances.

Suddenly, Moses raised his hands and dashed upon the rock the tablets of the law, which broke with a loud crash, and the sleeper thereupon leaped from his bed as though a loud blow had resounded upon the door of one of the rooms near by. At the same moment a frightful clap of thunder shook the filthy idol upon its eminence, and Moses raised his right hand to curse the impious crowd. The statue, struck by the fire of Heaven, fell upon the frightened dancers and crushed them beneath it. A voice from on high cried: "Thus shall perish all those who deny the Eternal and adore gold alone!" And then the prophetic vision vanished into darkness ploughed by fire.

Savinien awoke completely; he was frightened, agitated, and began to feel his limbs, in order to make sure that he was not still asleep. Never had he dreamed the like in all his life; he admitted to himself that he had felt afraid; and he was ashamed of this.

"I have seen the beast of the Apocalypse," muttered he, rubbing his eyes; "down at Plouër I only saw hares and little kids skipping before my setters. That dry champagne must be very heady to have played me such a trick as to make me over-lucid in my sleep. It is true that I drank a good deal of it at supper. Besides, this is the consequence of having handled money for hours together. The Golden Calf appears to me, and when I say *calf*, I draw it mild. It was really a golden *pig*, which

seemed to be copied from the trinket which my aunt presented to me. A golden pig? Ha! ha! my companions of last night indeed seemed to be given up to the worship of this beast, and they may end like those Hebrews. The future of France does not disquiet them, and all the warnings of Heaven would not keep them from similar gatherings. These people are given up to the fiend, and I am not and will not be. I shan't wear my watch charm any more, and to chase away bad dreams I will each night kiss that little medal which my cousin gave me. Poor Yvonne! how I shall amuse her by relating my vision!—but I shall say nothing of it to George; he would only laugh at me."

Then, after stretching himself for a moment, Savinien resumed his train of thought. "What time can it be? What! nine by this clock? Then, I have only just time enough to dress and take a bath before going to hand my letter-of-credit to Monsieur Montaurou. I might as well not go to-day as I went a third time last night, but my uncle urged me so much not to lose any time about it."

These reflections were interrupted by a noise in the passage beyond the adjoining sitting-room. A sharp voice, that of a chambermaid belonging to the hotel, or at least so it seemed, cried out loudly:

"I tell you, madame, that it is no use knocking. There's nobody in No. 26. The traveller who had that room left this morning."

It was evident that this remark was addressed to some one on the upper floor, where the man with the chest had lodged. There came an answer which Savinien did not hear, and then the servant resumed: "If you don't believe me, madame, you can inquire at the office. They will tell you there that the gentleman took the early train." "At what station?" "Oh, I don't know, but the waiter who took charge of the luggage knows, most likely, and if you like to ask him, madame, you will find him in the porter's room."

The visitor was probably satisfied with this incomplete information, for the talking ceased. She was perhaps going away.

"It is written that I shall be disturbed every moment either by that good-for-nothing man or his acquaintances," muttered Savinien, who, what with want of sleep and want of quiet, was not in the best of humours. "What a strange chap he must be! He nails up his chests himself and starts off without letting his friends know. Poor woman! She probably arose with the lark to see her adored one, and finds the door shut when she comes. That fur-clad fellow is a perfect cub. But," thought Savinien, philosophising, "a woman who comes calling at hotels cannot amount to much. She must be like the damsels at last night's supper, or worse perhaps. I suspect her of dancing before the Golden Calf, or the animal which, in those degenerate times, has taken its place. Well! up! I must get and dress in the twinkling of an eye."

With this sage resolution Savinien stretched himself again, yawned, and jumped out of bed.

He raised the curtain of the only window by which the light entered his chamber, and the sun of a bright April day shone in upon the commonplace furniture, such as is to be found in all hotels, even the most stylish. There was a velvet mantel-hanging and an English wash-basin, but not an object was for his own personal use, or associated with any recollection of the past.

The walls of the large room which he occupied at the château of Plouër were panelled with spruce, and decorated with guns, foils, and a number

of family portraits, painted by unassuming artists, but sufficiently good to make them agreeable objects of contemplation. Yvonne's hung at the foot of the bed, and smiled upon him whenever he awoke. The windows looked out upon a heath which stretched afar, and where at this season the brooms were always in full growth.

"Whatever George may say," sighed the exile, "Brittany has its merits. I went to bed earlier, but I never had the headache when I woke up, whereas this morning my head seems to weigh a hundred pounds. I will have no more late suppers."

Just as he gave way to these longings and regrets as regarded home, he heard the door of his sitting-room shake, the key move, and the bolt slip to. "Well, this is a little too much!" thought he. "My room is entered without my leave and some one is using it as a refuge." Had a worshipper of the Golden Pig come in to perform his or her devotions? If so, the choice would prove a bad one.

Savinien, before going into his bedroom some hours before, had taken the precaution to close the door between the two apartments, so that he could not now see who had so unceremoniously entered his sitting-room, the key to the door of which he had thoughtlessly left in the lock outside.

This way of taking possession was certainly strange. A servant might possibly have entered without knocking, but would not have presumed to push the bolt so as to close the door inside. Still less would a friend. Besides, Savinien knew no one in Paris excepting George Fougeray, who at this early hour was doubtless fast asleep.

"Can it be a robber?" muttered Yvonne's unsophisticated cousin.

Like all newly-arrived country people he believed in the tales told in Brittany of robbers who readily slip into strangers' rooms at Paris hotels when the lodgers are careless enough to leave their keys in the doors. However, Savinien was not cowardly, although credulous, and he now made ready to receive with energetic measures the scoundrel who had entered without his leave and shut himself up so as not to be disturbed while he rifled trunks and made off with clothing, jewellery, and money.

In the first place, however, there was nothing to take, unless it were the clock or candlesticks belonging to the establishment, or the hat, cloak, overcoat, and boots which Savinien had thrown about before sitting down to warm himself. All the viscount's other belongings happened to be in the bedroom. As it did not seem likely that the robber would content himself with such meagre spoil as could be pounced upon in the parlour, he would probably come and examine the bedroom, where he might suppose he would find some drawers containing objects of value.

"I will wait for him and give him a warm reception," said Viscount d'Amaulis to himself, and as he spoke he took up a pretty thorn stick which he had cut in the Plouër woods.

Then, striking an attitude, he listened. However, he heard nothing. The robber was not a noisy one. He could not be in any great haste to commence plundering, for he neither appeared nor touched anything. He had not displaced nor stirred any of the furniture, nor did the floor creak under his footsteps.

The scamp was evidently keeping quite still in the centre of the little sitting-room which he had invaded, unless, indeed, he had hidden in a corner.

"This is a singular proceeding," thought Savinien, "one would swear that this person, whoever he may be, has only come here to hide. Per-

haps he is being looked for. The key was in the door outside. That was tempting. He only had to take it out to find himself in safety, feeling quite sure that no one would break down the door. The deuce! I don't wish to give shelter to a malefactor whom the police may be after? If this be one I won't give him up, but I will make him take himself off in a jiffy. At all events I'll find out at once what is the matter, and as he does not come to me, I'll go to him."

With these words, Savinien put his hand upon the knob of the door by which the two rooms communicated, and he was about to open it, when a noise was heard in the passage beyond, some hasty steps, and loud voices speaking words which it was easy to distinguish.

"You are mistaken, sir," said one of these voices—a female one; "the lady did not go in there."

"I am sure that she did," replied another voice.

"There, now!" thought Savinien; "exactly as I thought! Some criminal has taken shelter in my room, and the police will besiege it. This is a pretty business! Really, I've had no peace since I arrived in Paris."

"I tell you," said the first voice, "that the gentleman in No. 19 came yesterday. The lady asked for the gentleman in No. 26, and she would come up; but she went down again, and has left the hotel. She went away some time ago."

"Twenty-six," thought Savinien; "that is the number of the room occupied by the gentleman who left this morning. The person who was looking for him was a woman. Can it be she, good heavens! who has come into my room?"

"She has not gone out of the hotel," resumed the voice of the second speaker. "I met her at the bottom of the staircase. She went back when she saw me; I followed her; she ran up stairs faster than I did, and I could not catch her, but I distinctly saw her take this passage when she reached the third floor."

"That is no reason why she should be in No. 19, sir. There are seven rooms on the third floor."

"That may be; but this is the first one, and I shall begin with it; and if I do not find her here, I shall look into the rest. I am determined to find her, and find her I will. Open this door."

"In the first place, I have not got the key, and besides——"

"Go and get it."

"There is only one, and you can see for yourself that it is inside."

"Knock!"

"Oh, no; I shall not. The gentleman inside arrived late last night. He is asleep, and I shan't take it upon myself to wake him. The landlord would dismiss me if I did."

"That is nothing to me; and since you don't know what to do, I shall knock myself."

Three loud knocks were now heard, followed by three more at short intervals.

"This is strange," said Savinien to himself. "No one stirs, but some one is there. I must see who it is. However, if I open the door to look into the sitting-room, the maniac outside will hear me."

"You see that he is asleep, since he doesn't reply," resumed the chambermaid.

"Nonsense! I knocked loudly enough to make a deaf man hear me.

If there is no answer, it only proves that she is there, and that this man is her accomplice. Come, open the door yourself!"

"But I cannot, indeed, sir."

"Then I will break down the door."

"You must not do that; I shall call the police."

This threat undoubtedly made some impression upon the man who had spoken, as a spell of silence followed. He said nothing, and did not attempt to break down the door.

"I don't know who you are," said the servant; "but I advise you not to make a disturbance; there is nothing to be gained by that. It would be much better to see the head of the house."

"Well, go and find him."

"Oh, that is soon done, if you will promise to keep quiet until I bring him here."

"I will wait five minutes and no more. And I warn you that I shall keep close to the door, and, as I shan't stir, no one will be able to go out without my leave. If there be any one stirring inside I shall hear, and if I do, I shall take proper measures."

"I will go down, and I shall not keep you waiting long."

All became quiet again. Savinien was greatly perplexed. The adventure was taking a troublesome turn. He did not care to be mixed up in a scandalous affair, but how was this to be avoided? It was impossible to open the door between the rooms without being heard by the man outside, who had just announced that he was about to listen at the outer door. The lady whom he was pursuing evidently reasoned in favour of silence, as she did not stir. And if Savinien did not move, when was the matter to come to an end?

Very probably then the landlord came up. But what would he do? Could he quiet the furious individual and make him listen to reason? This could scarcely be looked for. It was greatly to be dreaded that a fresh attack of rage would take possession of him, and that he would become still more aggressive. In this case Yvonne's cousin would be obliged to show himself, and he was by no means enlivened by the prospect.

Who was this man and what right had he to enter his rooms? He certainly was not acting in the name of the law. A commissary of police would only have needed to show his scarf of office in order to be admitted, and, besides locksmiths are not scarce.

Husbands have no right to bring them into play, unless with the authorisation of a magistrate; but when they are high tempered they give way to violence of all sorts, and break down doors themselves. Now, there seemed to be a probability that the gentleman who was blockading Savinien's door was a married man, and this hindrance did not make the situation any more agreeable.

What made matters still worse was that the five minutes had now elapsed, and the married man must be tired of waiting. He soon proved that he was so, for a blow from his fist struck the door, and this was followed by a kick which nearly drove the portal in.

Savinien became angry and was about to bring matters to an issue with the infuriated individual who was trying to burst in upon him, when he saw the woman who was pursued standing before him in the doorway between the rooms. She had had the presence of mind not to stir in the little parlour; moreover she had not lost a word of the

threatening words of her persecutor, and she had understood that the least noise would betray her presence.

However the man who pursued her was now proceeding to extreme violence, and she had fled into the inner room, so as to place a second barrier between herself and this madman. It was the instinct of self-preservation that urged her to do this, such a course from the idea of placing herself under the protection of a stranger; for she could scarcely be in a condition to reason as to her chances of safety.

When she opened the communicating door and found herself face to face with a young man, she could not retreat, as it to retreat, but Savinien, who had not lost his head, detained her by the arm, and said to her: "Come in, madame, don't be afraid, and tell me whoever he may be. I will protect you against the person who is attempting to enter my rooms."

"Save me, sir," murmured the woman in a faint voice.

"Fear nothing," replied the last of the Auneaus, in a tone of voice which left no doubt as to his strength of resolution. "No one shall enter. I answer for that." And he went into the little parlour.

He had scarcely had time to observe that the woman was elegantly clad and exceedingly pretty, for he had the satisfaction of hearing the sharp sound of the bolt as it slipped into its place. The fugitive was for the time at least in a safe place.

As an additional precaution, he took up the fire-shovel, which had remained in the room, and with the same in his hand he awaited the enemy's onslaught. He had continued standing near the door, which was becoming insecure, and could not long hold out, as it had never been made to withstand such attacks.

Savinien thought it best to reveal his presence before it came to that way altogether. "What is the meaning of all this disturbance?" said he, in a loud voice.

"Ah, you have made up your mind to answer at last?" replied the besieging party. "Open at once or I shall break everything down."

"I shall not open till you tell me what you want."

"Ah! that's the way you answer. Oh, we shall see!" And a still more vigorous kick bent the lock and split the fastenings.

"I warn you that I am armed, and that if you enter here by force I will break your head," calmly said Savinien.

This native of Brittany was warlike by nature. Danger lent him coolness.

"I will break yours!" howled the man outside, setting his shoulders against the door, as if to give a last decisive shove. The bolt had almost yielded.

Savinien drew back to avoid the shock, with his cane ready and his arm bent. He had taken lessons in the art of self-defence while he was at Rennes. An artillery officer had been his teacher, and he knew perfectly well how to use a stick.

It is the arm used by all young men in this part of the country, and he had sometimes used it against evil-intentioned persons, who had been taking too much cider, and were disposed to pick a quarrel with him on their way home from market. He accordingly thought himself well able to repulse the invader, and did not fear a battle, though it after all he was somewhat mortified at being reduced to using a mere stick, like some rustic clown.

"This is a pretty beginning in Paris!" thought he. "My uncle, who

sent me here to complete my social training, would make an ugly grimace if he saw me defending myself with a stick. If it were only a sword he might not feel so badly, as he used to handle that weapon very well himself in bygone days. What would Yvonne think if she knew that I was the knight of a compromised dame?"

These reflections did not make him lose sight of the door which was about to fly to pieces, but at this moment, to his great satisfaction, steps were heard outside. Reinforcements were coming. The landlord of the hotel, warned by the maid, was coming up with two waiters, and this detachment was sufficiently strong to cope with the brawler who was thus disturbing the peace of the inmates of the third floor. Some people had got up and opened their doors to ascertain the meaning of all this noise, so that the gentleman would have to try conclusions with a number of persons, all equally unfavourable in their feelings towards him.

Savinien no longer had to fear being forced to take part in a ridiculous struggle, and he thought proper to show himself. Without stopping to listen to the stormy words exchanged between the hotel-keeper and the angry man, he drew back the bolt and turned the key as well as could be done in the damaged state of the lock.

The door opened, and he found himself in presence of a gentleman whose appearance did not concide in the least with the ideas conveyed by the kicks. This madly jealous man was very carefully dressed, and his face was not indicative of a fiery disposition. Clad in a black overcoat, his tie arranged with care, and with neatly-cropped whiskers on his cheeks, he resembled a lawyer.

He was certainly a man belonging to the wealthy classes, if not to the best society, and as a usual thing he ought to have been a quiet sort of being. But at this moment he was beside himself. His face was scarlet, and his eyes seemed to be starting out of his head. Everything looked red before these angry eyes of his.

The hotel-keeper and the waiters came round him, and made ready to reduce him to reason if he gave way to further violence. The precaution was a wise one, but it was needless, for on seeing the occupant of No. 19 appear, he made an effort to restrain himself.

By this simple effort at self-control, Savinien saw that the stranger was a man of the world, and this put him at his ease. With an equal, the worst that could occur would be a duel, and the prospect of such a thing did not disturb him.

"Really, sir," said he, "your manner of announcing yourself is very eccentric. I was sleeping soundly when your noise awoke me. What do you want with me, and why have you broken down my door?"

"I don't want you at all," replied the gentleman in a voice husky with rage. "I do not know you."

"What do you want?"

"A woman came in here. I must see her."

"You are crazy! No one has entered here, for the excellent reason that before I went to bed I secured the door which you have been trying to batter down."

"There, what did I tell you?" exclaimed the chambermaid, who had come to the rescue.

"This gentleman came in at four this morning, and alone," added a man servant; "I know that he did, as I was on night-service, and gave him his candle myself. So now!"

"The woman for whom I am looking came here twenty minutes ago," answered the door-smasher.

"Come, sir," said the landlord of the hotel, "you have no right to create a scandal in a respectable house, and I beg of you to go away. This scene has lasted quite long enough, and if you refuse to go of your own free will I shall send to the police station. I presume that you would scarcely like to be taken there yourself, as you appear to belong to polite society, in which people respect themselves under all circumstances."

The hotel-keeper expressed himself in good terms, and the discreet allusion to good breeding had a certain effect. The jealous man began to understand that he would gain nothing by threats, and so he changed his tone.

"Well, sir," said he to Savinien, "I admit that I was wrong to attempt a forcible entrance, but I began by knocking and you failed to reply."

"I told you that I was asleep," replied Yvonne's cousin, who found himself led on from one falsehood to another.

"I am willing to believe you, but now that you are awake you will not refuse to allow me to search your apartment."

"I absolutely refuse! There is no one here, I repeat it. But I shall not permit you to assure yourself of the fact. My word must suffice. Had you taken different measures I might, perhaps, have consented to what you ask, but I beg to tell you that I am not to be forced to do anything."

"The gentleman is in the right," interposed the hotel-keeper, "and I once more beg of you to go, sir. To remain will serve no purpose, for I declare that you shall not go into the room. We are numerous enough to prevent it. Watch the house, if you choose, from the street, but every one of my lodgers is master of his own room, and it is my duty to help him in so being, and to protect the entrance of his apartment."

"Besides, sir," said Savinien, "if you have anything further to demand of me, you will find me at your orders. I am the Viscount d'Amaulis."

"The Viscount d'Amaulis!" exclaimed the breaker-down of doors. "Don't you belong to Brittany?"

"I have just arrived from there," said Savinien, somewhat surprised by the effect produced by his name upon a man whom he had never beheld before. "Do you know me?"

"No. I only know that there is a family named Amaulis in the Ille-et-Vilaine department."

"There is only one person of the name, and I am he."

"Then you are the Baron de Trémorin's nephew?"

"Exactly, but how does that concern you?"

"It doesn't matter," curtly replied the gentleman, whose face wore a singular expression.

The information which he had just received, without asking for it, had produced a strange effect upon him. He no longer threatened, and he spoke in a much lower tone. He was not precisely calm, but he evidently hesitated as to the course to pursue. Savinien profited by this incomprehensible change; it was the moment to settle matters with the angry man, as he now seemed more inclined to listen to reason.

"Come, sir," said Yvonne's cousin, "I do not know who is the object of your search, nor do I care to know. I limit myself to saying that there is no one in my room, and that if there were, I should not permit you to enter. It is therefore useless to insist, and I trust that you will leave me

in peace. I would add, that if you are not satisfied, I am disposed to give you satisfaction when I have learned your name."

"The gentleman is in the right," added the hotel-keeper, "and he is very kind to take things in this way. And as it is my duty to secure tranquillity for my lodgers, if you do not retire without further delay, I assure you that I shall summon the police."

"You should have begun by doing so," said another lodger, who had opened his door and was looking on. "It isn't proper to upset a whole hotel in this way, under the pretext of hunting for a woman."

"You see that every one says that you are in the wrong," resumed the hotel-keeper. "Once more I desire you, for your own sake, to go away."

"Tell me your name," added Savinien, "and we shall meet when and where you wish."

"I need not tell you my name," muttered the intruder, whom every one present was endeavouring to get rid of. "It is sufficient that I know yours, and I will go if you give me your word of honour that no woman entered your room."

This was a skilful trick, and at first threw Savinien off his guard, but he got out of the difficulty by feigning to be pushed beyond his patience.

"Oh, you tire me out!" cried he. "I have nothing more to say to you, and when I assert a thing it must be believed. Go to the devil!" And he shut the door, which still held on after a fashion, in the face of the jealous man.

This done, he slipped the bolt away, and waited without much anxiety for the end of this curious affair. He knew that the attempts at door-breaking would not begin again. The landlord and his servants would prevent that. And however furious the intruder might be, he must see that he could do nothing but retire. And, indeed, after a few more loud words, the talking ceased outside; and Savinien had the satisfaction of hearing that the trouble-some personage who had awakened the lodgers was being rapidly led away. The people occupying apartments near by retired to their rooms, and silence prevailed anew.

As an additional precaution, Savinien looked through the window, and saw the disagreeable individual pass across the courtyard, accompanied by the waiters who were urging him on.

"I am rid of him," thought he, "but he is quite capable of mounting guard in the street, and when the poor woman goes out Heaven only knows what will befall her. However, I cannot keep her here for ever."

A slight noise made him turn his head. The door of the bed-room had opened and the fugitive stood before him.

She had not lifted the veil which hid her features as well as a mask; but it was easy to see that she was not very young, although of elegant appearance. In figure, she was tall. A woman's age may be as easily divined by her figure as by her face, and Savinien saw at a glance that the lady before him must have passed beyond her thirtieth birthday by several years. She wore an elegant morning walking costume, which might have served as travelling attire; an otter-skin hat, somewhat heavy boots, which showed off her slender feet, the instep of which was high; and a detail which Savinien had not remarked when she had first taken refuge in his rooms—in her small hands, gloved with black kid, she held a casket of polished steel which seemed rather heavy, and which she now placed upon the table of the parlour.

Savinien looked at her very earnestly, and felt much more ill at ease in her presence than in front of the madman who had been pursuing her.

It was the first time in his life that he had met with such an adventure, and he was without any experience as to the manner of getting out of the singular situation in which chance had placed him.

He knew not what to say or do. But it was necessary to decide, and he felt that the affair was by no means cleared up; indeed, that this was but the prologue or a piece, the end of which depended in a great measure upon himself. The strange woman came to his aid. "I have heard all," said she, in a sweet and penetrating voice, the sound of which touched his heart. "You have saved me, and I shall be grateful to you for ever."

"I have done what any one would have done in my place," stammered Savinien.

"Another would not have so courageously given his name to a furious man to turn his anger upon himself. You have sacrificed yourself for me."

"It was quite natural that I should give my name, as he quarrelled with me; but I did not, I confess, expect to see my name produce such an effect on him. I still wonder whether he knew me."

"I did not know the name either, but I shall remember it all my life."

This reply upset all the Vicomte d'Arcadie conjectures. If the man was the husband, the lady ought to have experienced similar surprise on learning his name.

"You must think very ill of me," said she, in a soft voice.

"It is not for me to judge you," replied Savinien, with embarrassment.

"You are a brave man, and I am sure you will not endeavour to find out a woman's secrets. But I wish to tell you why I entered this hotel, and what forced me to hide myself here."

"I declare to you, madame, that I ask you nothing concerning all this."

"I know it, sir, and I also know that if we should meet later on, and you should learn my name, you would not abuse the avowal I am about to make. When you gave me shelter I was flying from my husband."

Savinien inadvertently made a gesture which showed somewhat too clearly that this confession told him nothing that he had not already guessed.

"But I am less guilty than you may think," added the lady. "I did not come here to deceive him. I came to find the casket which you see to some one in this house. If I told you what it contains and why I brought it, you would learn a sad story, which I have no right to tell, as the secret is not mine alone. My husband, who is ignorant of it, must be in the street and followed me. I had not told him that I intended to go out, and it doubtless appeared suspicious to him that I should be walking about so early as here. He had followed me from the house, and I did not know that he was doing so. I mounted the staircase and came up to the floor where the individual whom I wished to see had been lodging. I knocked at his door; it was not opened, and a chambermaid called out to me that the person whom I wished to see was not there. She was wrong, I am sure of it, for I was to be here this morning, and was expected, but I feared to attract attention, and came down stairs again."

"And just as you reached the foot of the stairs you saw your husband in the courtyard."

"Yes. Then I lost my presence of mind, I ran up stairs hastily and

he ran after me. To avoid him I darted along the passage, I found a key in a door, and—you know the rest."

"I know the beginning also," replied Savinien in a low tone, "for I heard what the chambermaid said."

"Then, sir," replied the lady in a different tone of voice, "I must ask one more service of you. It is to go up those stairs, which I dare not mount again for fear of meeting some servant, and, before I go away, to deliver this casket to the person in No. 26."

"I would do so with pleasure, but the gentleman left this morning."

"Gone! Impossible!" exclaimed the lady.

Her voice trembled, and it was easy to guess that she turned pale under her thick veil.

"I assure you, madame," said Savinien, "that the traveller who lodged on the fourth floor just above this room left this morning at five o'clock."

"The maid spoke the truth, then?" murmured the strange woman.

"Yes, that gentleman must have taken an early train at I know not what station. I can assure you of this, as I had been dozing in an arm-chair and the noise made by the porters in removing his luggage woke me up."

"Nothing proves that the person who left the hotel was the person whom I wished to find."

"He was a tall, powerful man."

"You saw him?"

"Yes, at the moment when he was crossing the courtyard."

"He—he was not alone?"

"No, two porters went before him laden with all sorts of boxes. Among others there was an enormous chest——"

"Excuse me, sir, but that is not what I ask. I should like to know whether a young girl, or rather a child, wasn't with him."

"No, madame, I should certainly have seen her."

"Then it was not he."

Savinien, this time, bowed without replying. He understood nothing from all these broken words, and was not sorry to be able to make the lady understand that she was presuming too much in overwhelming him with questions, the motive of which he did not comprehend.

"Excuse me," murmured she, sinking back upon a sofa, "I am so much troubled that I can scarcely understand what you say."

"Well," thought Savinien, "is she going to stay here?"

After a moment's silence, however, she resumed in a husky voice: "I entreat you to tell me the truth. I have the greatest possible interest in knowing it."

"I assure you, madame, that I have told it. The gentleman went away alone, and seemed to be setting off on a long journey. He was dressed for such a journey, and wrapped in furs, although it is spring time."

"Then it was he!" cried she. "But how can it be? I had written that I was coming this morning; he was expecting me; so was she."

"She?" repeated Savinien, with surprise.

"The child."

"The child of whom you speak may have left before the gentleman himself. She was, no doubt, already in the hotel omnibus when I looked out of the window. Since it concerns you, it will be easy to ascertain all this. The servants of the hotel must know, and I will——"

"Do not call them, I beg of you. I have been only too much seen already."

"As for the gentleman," resumed Savinien, who was becoming impatient, "he must certainly have made previous arrangements to leave to-day, for he passed a great part of the night in making preparations. I returned here late, and he had not gone to bed when I came in. I heard him walking about, knocking, and nailing up."

"Nailing up?"

"Yes, indeed. He hammered away for three quarters of an hour. I thought that he must be packing up his purchases. It is probable that I wasn't wrong, for I saw a large chest carried out, a chest which must have been of great weight."

The lady no longer listened to Savinien. She held down her head, and her quick breathing was divined by the heaving of her breast. It was evident that ungovernable emotion kept her silent, and held her to her seat on the sofa.

This silence and immobility did not suit Savinien, whose only wish was that she would depart as soon as possible. He had very willingly interposed to protect her from the violence of her exasperated husband, but he did not care to make himself the perpetual champion of a woman who inspired an instinctive mistrust in his mind.

The acquaintance of this persecuted person with the gentleman in No. 26 seemed to him as suspicious as the proceedings of that personage himself, for what would be thought of a man who spent his nights in driving nails into chests? Savinien detected a drama, and his tastes did not run that way. And if this were only one of those intrigues which crop up at every moment in Paris, he had no wish to be associated with it.

This morning, besides, it was necessary for him to go out, and he wished to dress. Time was passing, and the lady did not seem to think of going away.

"I cannot turn her out," thought he, glancing stealthily at her. And he cudgelled his brains to find some means of getting rid of her without failing in the politeness due to the weaker sex.

But he could find no way. The art of getting out of a delicate situation was not taught at Plouer. Down there at the chateau, life was uniform, and each person went his way without stumbling. "It is distressing to have so little imagination," he said to himself. "I am sure that if George Fougeray were here he would know what to do at once. To him such an adventure would be nothing but good luck. That is what it is to be a Parisian, and to be able to turn everything to account. I shall never be anything but a simpleton."

Savinien did not, however, need to trouble himself thus, for the lady, shaking off the stupor which had kept her seated, now rose. "Sir," said she, "you have probably saved my life, as my husband would have killed me. You will not, I trust, refuse to save my honour."

"That is too late in the day," thought the viscount, much annoyed by this fresh demand.

"I am going to leave this room where you have had the kindness to allow me to remain at the risk of seriously compromising yourself. I am about to return home. It is likely that my husband awaits me there, and will ask me whence I come. If he sees this casket I am lost."

"This casket!" thought Savinien, who had forgotten the object placed by the fugitive upon the table in the parlour.

"Yes; my husband knows what it contains, and I shall not be able to account to him for having it. I asked you a moment ago to hand it to some one who resided in this hotel— —"

"But who, as you now know, no longer resides here," eagerly replied Savinien, who had no desire to be concerned in the matter.

"I believe it, sir, although this sudden departure is unaccountable to me; however, since the person for whom I brought the casket has gone, I beg of you to keep it here."

"But, madame, how can I do that? What should I do with a casket that does not belong to me?"

"You can keep it until I come to claim it."

"That is a responsibility which I cannot assume. How can I take charge of an object to the possession of which you attach so much importance? You do not even know me well enough!"

"I know that you are a brave and loyal gentleman. That is sufficient to make me confide in you."

"Your confidence does me honour, but you forget that, if this casket were found in my possession——"

"If it were, the Viscount d'Amaulis could not be accused of having stolen it; and were you challenged to give it up, you would know how to protect it even as you protected me. But I swear to you that no one shall ever know that it is in your hands."

"I may leave this house any day, even leave Paris, where my stay is limited. What should I do with this deposit in such a case?"

"You will not go away without leaving your address, and if you leave Paris, I know that you are to be found in Brittany; your name must be known there; and I can easily find out where to write to you."

"I live at the Château de Plouër, near Dinan, but——"

"Do not refuse me, sir, I entreat you," said the veiled lady, in a supplicating tone. "I ask it of you in the name of your beloved. At your age men love and are loved. The life of this accursed city has not yet withered your heart. You must have a friend, perhaps a betrothed. I swear to you that if she could see and hear me she would pity me and would add her entreaties to mine that you should become the guardian of this casket."

Savinien started. This unexpected allusion to his pure love moved him. He thought the lady very daring, in the ugly position of her own affairs, to thus invoke these thoughts with regard to a young girl so unlike herself. But he said to himself that this woman, who had run off the social rails, so to speak, was not, perhaps, so guilty as he had at first thought. There was a mystery in this matter which seemed unlike a commonplace conjugal slip.

At this moment a soft tap was heard at the door, and a voice which he recognised said in a low tone: "Be kind enough to open the door, sir. I am the landlord, and I must speak to you at once, in the interest of the person who is with you."

Savinien had not expected this interruption, but soon guessed the cause. It was evident that the husband had not gone off, and that the hotel-keeper had come to warn the lady and her protector against some new danger, perhaps that of an aggressive return of the enraged man who had already made so violent an assault.

Savinien would not, however, decide upon admitting the landlord without the lady's consent. He consulted her by a look, and she un-

-itterly replied: "Open the door, sir. Situated as I am, I cannot onceal myself from the people here."

"At all events," said the man, "he will not see your face any more han I have seen it myself, and I presume that he can tell you how to get way from here." Thereupon the young fellow slipped back the bolt.

The landlord entered at once, and closed the door behind him. He as a middle-aged man, with a very jovial countenance, and had an agreeable xpression which at once inspired confidence. He bowed very politely to he lady without trying to discern her features through her veil, and said, ddressing Viscount d'Amaulis rather than her: "I should not have taken you my oath to appear, but the case is urgent. The gentleman who made at stormy scene only left a few minutes ago in order to succeed the better in s purpose. He saw that he could not enter the room, and so he has now osted himself at the door of the courtyard."

"I thought so," muttered Savinien.

"When I say 'at the door,' that is not exactly the truth. My waiters ould have prevented him from stationing himself there. Fortunately, ey watched him, and saw what he was at. He had to go off, went wards the boulevard, and even turned the corner of the Rue du Helder, inking, no doubt, that the lady would not come out for some little time. ien, after having vanished for two or three minutes, he returned, keepg close to the wall over the way. And now he has entered a bye-street ich is exactly opposite my house. He had hidden himself as well as he uld, which is but badly, and is still there, evidently on the look out."

"But you are not obliged to tolerate being spied upon," exclaimed e Viscount d'Amaulis.

"It would be difficult to prevent it," replied the hotel-keeper, smiling, the street belonging, as I do, to every one. I cannot play the police th my neighbours."

"Then I will send him away," answered the impetuous native of ittany, striding towards the door.

"I beg of you, sir, don't do that," exclaimed the veiled lady. "I cant allow you to expose yourself to danger for me. It better becomes me submit to the punishment which my imprudence and my evil fate have ought about. Perhaps, however, something could be done even now. cab might drive up and I might enter and by lowering the blinds——"

"That way would be scarcely safe," answered the hotel-keeper; "the ntleman from his hiding place, can plainly see all that is going on down irs, and he would not fail to follow the cab."

"Then I am lost, for I cannot remain here!"

"I came up, madame, for the purpose of telling you how you can leave e without the slightest danger."

"What! I can——"

"The hotel adjoins another one which is entered by the Rue de la ussée-d'Antin and there is a door of communication," interrupted the dlord.

"What a happy chance!" murmured Savinien, without disguising the ight caused him by this unexpected news.

"And the door is just at the foot of the staircase at the end of the ," resumed the providential landlord, "so that the lady will not be ged to enter the court-yard at all. But there is no time to lose. The ntleman may take it into his head to try his previous tactics, and there been disturbance enough for one day."

"I am ready to follow you, sir," replied the lady, with emotion. "You are saving me, and I swear never to forget it. Monsieur d'Amaulis also has saved me," added she, looking at Savinien, who started on hearing his name uttered by the stranger in whom, in spite of himself he had become interested, although he was annoyed by this disturbance of his peace.

He did not know how to look or what to say to express what he felt, and so kept silence. Under the circumstances, this silence was almost rude, but the lady did not appear to feel it to be so, and she added no more to what she had said. She only thought of her flight, as was natural.

"Come, madame," said the worthy landlord who was so efficaciously aiding her in the serious strait in which she found herself, and who had displayed such perfect tact in this very delicate interview.

She hesitated for an instant, and it was easy to see that before departing, she would have been glad to have given her hand to the generous young man who had defended her, bnt she had more than one reason for not prolonging the interview, and went out, but not without a glance at him, which flashed from behind her heavy veil of black *blonde*. Savinien, more disturbed than before, followed her to the end of the corridor, and saw with pleasure that no door was opened as the fugitive passed by, led on by the obliging landlord. The inmates of the floor whom the noise had attracted, had returned to their rooms and troubled themselves no more as to the results of the affair. Savinien, leaning over the banisters, saw the lady and her guide go down the three flights and disappear along a dark passage, on their way to the safe exit.

"At last!" murmured he, with a sigh of relief. "I am free! The husband may come back when he likes. I don't care for him now. But what an adventure! Fougeray advised me to plunge into Parisian life. I should say that this was plunging up to the very neck. I have been nearly drowned, for I came very near having a duel on my hands—a duel and for a woman! A pretty state of things! But all's well that ends well, and it is ended—thanks to my good landlord. Well! I owe him a handsome recompense; and I wonder how I shall best offer it him."

As he was thus congratulating himself on having avoided undesirable results, the viscount returned to his parlour. The first thing that met his eyes as he did so was the steel casket which the lady had left on the table.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I forgot to return it to her, and I'll wager that she forgot it on purpose when she went away. Just as I was flattering myself that I had made my way out of this labyrinth! It was written that I should be trapped! That woman has a hold upon me now! I am her confidant—her accomplice, perhaps; for heaven only knows what is in this box! What shall I do with it? I have a great mind to pitch it out of the window. What if I ran after this crazy creature who gave me her secrets to take care of? No, I should not catch her; but if she returns in search of her casket, I shall receive her as she deserves to be received; and come she will, no doubt. Meantime I am a most unwilling custodian, and in some way or other I am determined to be rid of my charge."

The viscount had reached this point in his soliloquy, when the hotel keeper reappeared. "It is done," said he, in a low tone. "I fortunately caught sight of a cab which was not engaged just as we reached the entrance in the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin. The lady got into it, and I can assure you that no one saw her. Now, sir, you can go out by the main

orway whenever you please. The gentleman who is keeping watch will e you pass by, and, finding you unaccompanied, he will be completely zzled. He may wait an hour or two more, but he must end by going."

Savinien was greatly tempted to tell this intelligent landlord all the tails of the adventure, and even to consult him, but he thought better t to do so, and merely thanked him warmly.

"Oh, I am only too happy, sir, to have been able to prevent Monsieur Trémorin's nephew from being annoyed. Your uncle has often done e the honour of putting up here," replied the hotel-keeper.

"If he should come here during my stay in Paris, I should be greatly bliged to you if you will say nothing to him about this ridiculous atter," said Savinien, hastily.

"Oh, it is my business to be discreet."

"Not so discreet, I hope, as not to tell me who was the traveller whose parture this morning has been the cause of so much annoyance to me."

"He was a Swede, who called himself Count Aparanda. I don't fail in professional discretion in telling you his name, which is on my register, d can be seen by one and all."

"Then the lady who was looking for him was probably a foreigner, o?"

"All that I can tell you is, that she never came here before. The unt had no visitors during the eight days which he spent in this house."

"That is strange. The lady spoke of a young girl who ought to have t with him this morning."

"She was mistaken. The count came and left alone."

"Going to Sweden?"

"Oh, I only know that he went to the terminus of the Northern Rail- y line. He was very uncommunicative, and did not think fit to tell me ere he was going."

Savinien had allowed himself to question his host little by little, and ne had begun, he now asked him what he thought of the strange occur- ce which had ended without any bad results. The landlord thereupon etly replied: "These things happen very frequently in Paris. We are d to them. The exit in the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin has been used e than once in this way. But I don't think that lady will ever return. was very much alarmed."

'Well, I am afraid that she *will* do so. She forgot this casket. I 't know what to do with it."

'If you don't wish to keep it I will place it in my safe; but it would better to deposit it with your banker until it is reclaimed. In this way her you nor I can be held responsible."

'I will do so," said Savinien, struck by the idea. "I have business h him this morning, and I will ask him to take charge of it."

The landlord now took leave of the viscount, who made haste to com- e his toilet, for it was past ten, and he was very desirous of keeping appointment which he had made to meet George at Tortoni's that He longed to tell him the events of the morning, in order to prove he was not so countrified as he appeared.

II.

Two hours after the fortunate termination of this complicated affa
Savinien was walking along the Boulevard des Italiens. It was a love
spring morning, and he felt the need of walking to clear his head. H
had recovered from his annoyance, but his brain ached and the open a
revived him.

Savinien, when at Plouer, never breakfasted until he had taken
walk of five or six miles at the pace of a gymnast, and this merely
give himself an appetite. He did not wish to set aside so healthy
practice.

He did not, therefore, take a cab to make the visits which he h
decided upon. Those which he required to make on the left hand of t
Seine might be put off till the afternoon, the dowagers of the Faubou
Saint-Germain never receiving before four. But business people are to
seen in the morning, and Savinien had arranged his programme for t
day accordingly.

He determined to go, in the first place, to his uncle's banker with t
two letters—one of recommendation and the other of credit—given to h
by M. de Trémorin before his departure, and then to meet Geor
Fougeray at Tortoni's, and later on to cross the Seine to make for
visits in his own name and that of the baron to some relatives with wh
he was but little acquainted. And in order to avoid the trouble of
turning to his hotel he had dressed for the evening.

It must not be supposed that he had fallen into such a mistake as
put on a dress-coat and white tie in the morning. He was not
countrified. But he wore a black Albert buttoned over a white waistco
grey pantaloons and patent leather boots, a style of attire which Parisi
who pride themselves upon elegance do not usually assume till later
the day. And still another social solecism—he carried a large pa
wrapped in a newspaper in his hand.

The Viscount d'Amaulis knew very well that it was not customary
a gentleman to carry a parcel in the street, even though it were but a
of note-paper, but he wished to take a walk as usual, and, besides, to
himself of the casket which the unknown lady had voluntarily forgot
in the apartment of her champion. Since Savinien had been delive
from this mysterious person, he had reflected a great deal as to the
plight in which she had placed him by leaving the casket behind her,
he had decided to follow the advice of the hotel-keeper.

He thought that the casket would be much safer in a banking-ho
than in the wardrobe of a hotel room, and that it would be time enc
to reclaim the deposit when the lady appeared and asked for it. "
if she does not do so," thought he, "I am not responsible. The ca
can remain at the banker's till the end of time."

Savinien was like a child who believes that everything moves on
simplest manner, and he counted upon getting out of his difficulty
means which presented obstacles of which he had no idea. He had t
care, on leaving the hotel, to hide the casket under his arm lest
husband should be concealed near by, and this was wisely done, as he
him crouching at the end of a by-street.

Savinien passed by, however, without appearing to observe him, bu

ruing the Rue du Helder he glanced back. The jealous man did not ow himself.

"Good!" said Savinien to himself; "he hopes that his wife is still side, and he will play the scene till to-morrow. He must have seen , however, but it isn't I he wants. He knows my name, he knows at I have just arrived from the country, and he must believe that if I ve played a part in the matter it is purely by accident. He will let e alone, and as for his faithless one, he may wait as long as he pleases. e must have no idea how long ago. When they meet there will be an d interview. I should like to see it if only to laugh at these Parisians, o think that no one can deceive them. Really, husbands are not so apid in Brittany, nor are wives so treacherous. It must be admitted, how er, that in Brittany, and even at Saint-Malo, they have fewer facilities for ading their partners. Houses don't have two doors there like the Rue Helder hotel."

This soliloquy carried the viscount till he reached the Boulevard des nacines. The lodging-house for which he was bound was situated in Avenue de l'Opéra, and the hour to reach it was neither long nor ary.

When the winter is over, only a few try to breathe all Paris out doors. The roadway is covered with sand, and powerfully diluted anthracite the wide pavements. It was not yet the hour, however, at ich fashionable women appear in their evening attire. Only people in a rry could be seen hastening on in every direction.

"Where are they going?" muttered Savinien, feeling quite giddy, in midst of this tornado; "they rather resemble leaves in a high wind. ey look as though they were crazy or delirious—with a gold fever hops. They are running after fortune. Much good may it do them! ould rather never set it if it is to cause so much trouble."

He endeavoured to speak no more, when he suddenly came up against a tleman, who cried out: "Take care! whither are you going?"

"What, is it you?" exclaimed Savinien, recognising his friend Fougeray.

"What! what! already out? You didn't sleep long, it seems," replied rge, laughing.

"I didn't sleep at all."

"Where are you going so early?"

"To Monsieur Montearan, the banker, in the Avenue de l'Opéra."

"Is it the man or his wife you wish to call upon?"

"Both, though I don't absolutely need money, thanks to our game of ls."

"Get some, it will do no harm: but if you wish to see the good tauran, I warn you that the chances are that you won't find him in the nue de l'Opéra."

"Why not?"

"Because he doesn't live there. His banking-house is there, no doubt, though he goes there every day it isn't at this hour."

"Where does he reside?"

"At his own house, not far from the Parc Monceau. However, you certainly find his partner, who will give you your money. That is the thing. Ask him to show you over the house, the vaults especially: will interest you. But don't stay too long, as I must be on 'Change one till two—there is a stroke to make; I will explain it to you. I n't time to breakfast at Tortoni's, it is too far from the shop. Come

to Champeaux' on the Place de la Bourse instead. You know it, eh? Ah you went there with your uncle once. Very good; now I'm off!"

"He is as crazy as the rest of them; off he goes and vanishes!" mutterec Savinien. "I should never get used to a life like that of a squirrel in a revolving cage."

He resumed his road to the Avenue de l'Opéra, although the information given him by George had upset his calculations. Uncle Trémorin ha urged him to see M. Montauron himself, and he had just learned that th latter lived half a league away from his banking-house. Savinien though for a moment of putting off the visit till another day, but he reflected tha the partner would undoubtedly tell him how to find the head of the house and so he continued walking on.

Two minutes later he had reached the door of a handsome building. I was so large and so handsome, indeed, that the Viscount d'Amaulis thoug at first that he had mistaken the number in coming down the Avenue c l'Opéra.

At Saint Malo, and even at Rennes, the banking-houses are of pla appearance. Savinien, no doubt, expected to see handsome ones in Pari but he did not suppose that financial business was carried on in perfe palaces. Now, the front of the building which he saw before him had imposing an appearance that he felt himself seized with a respectf hesitation in approaching the capitalists who had constructed such a palac

However, this was, undoubtedly, the house he sought. Above the doc as wide and as high as a triumphal arch, there was a black marble plate, which was inscribed in letters of gold:

"THE PROVINCIAL BANK,"

and somewhat lower down in less conspicuous lettering came the words:

MONTAURON & Co.,

BANKING AND COLLECTION OF ACCOUNTS.

To judge by all this splendour, the establishment founded and ca ried on by uncle Trémorin's banker must be one of the most noted all Paris. Savinien was in no wise surprised that it should have be selected by his uncle; but he was rather astonished that the owner Plouer should be so intimate with so weighty a financier as to write him privately with relation to his nephew's affairs.

The letter of credit was easily understood; M. de Montauron was u doubtedly the correspondent of the Saint Malo firm which had issued to M. de Trémorin. But the letter of recommendation was almost inco prehensible, for the Provincial Bank had never been mentioned at château, and Savinien had heard the name of M. Montauron for the fi time on the eve of his departure.

"Don't fail to see him the morning after you arrive," Yvonne's fat had said. "He is an excellent man, though a new-comer and of differ opinions to ours. He will receive you well, and will enable you to en society—which will be advantageous to you."

Savinien remembered that his far-seeing uncle had, on his last journ to Paris, established business relations with this gentleman, still never imagined that Montauron was at the head of a first-class est lishment. The Baron de Trémorin had a snug little fortune in land, in Brittany landowners have little capital to dispose of, especially for v banking operations, and Savinien did not imagine that his uncle co

ve shares in the Provincial Bank. How was it, then, that the gentle
n-farmer was so free with the prince of finance?
"Who knows?" said Savinien to himself, "they perhaps travelled
gether at one time. Why shouldn't this Montauron have been in the
y in his youth? It doesn't matter to me after all. I risk nothing in
ng to call on him. If he receives me coldly I shall refrain from calling
in, and my uncle can have no fault to find. While I wait till he does
the honour to receive me I can present my letter of credit to his
rks and ask them to put this confounded casket in their vaults."
And, to end the hesitation of which he felt quite ashamed, he ran up
four steps leading to the *penetralia*. He found himself in a vast hall,
ed with green marble and having doors on all sides—a hall, or rather
ourt, with a great display of glass, and innumerable counters. The
lls were covered with inscriptions, precisely as at the Treasury, and
merous clerks seated behind gratings were handling bundles of notes
rolls of gold.
There were people before the gratings and others at the tables, where
moranda were made or cheques endorsed: there were people every-
ere. Millions enclosed in portfolios circulated through the crowd,
l no one turned to see them pass. There was a perpetual going and
ning, an incessant buzz, which might be taken for muttered prayers to
e god of wealth.
These people looked as though they knew no other, and the Viscount
Amaulis remembered his dream. "Only the Golden Calf is needed
re," thought he. "It would have a fine effect in the middle of this
mple for current accounts."
To tell the truth, he was quite at sea, and looked rather foolish with
casket under his arm. However, a superintendent, who wore on his
ery a military medal and the cross of the Legion of Honour, asked him
y politely what he wished, and at the mere words "letter of credit"
owed him which staircase to mount. Letters of this kind were always
ked over on the first floor. This staircase was superb, broad and easy
ascend, like those of museums or royal abodes, and it led to an ante-
om much more luxuriously decorated than the drawing-room of the
nor of Plouër.
Savinien explained his business to a servant as imposing as a beadle, to
om he learned that he must intrust the letter, and a memorandum of
e sum he wished to receive. The nephew had not forgotten that his
cle had especially urged upon him not to run through his credit too
n, and so he inscribed the modest sum of a thousand francs.
"I shall be taken for a pauper," thought he, while he awaited the
urn of the servant covered with gold lace, who had undertaken to carry
a head clerk the last of the Amaulis' meagre appeal for funds. He did
t wait long, however, and was surprised to hear the servant, who re-
ned empty-handed, say that M. Bouret would like to speak to him.
"Who is Monsieur Bouret?" he asked timidly.
"Monsieur Bouret is the under-manager of the Provincial Bank,"
plied the servant with marked respect.
"Very well. Take me to him," replied Savinien with an air of in-
ference. He was secretly quite abashed. He asked himself whether
e gentleman in question imagined that his letter was a forgery.
The flunkey opened a door ornamented with gilt nails, and respectfully
uested Savinien to step forward.

At the same time, from the further end of a room which looked like a prime minister's study, a man with a pleasant face came forward, with both hands extended, to meet the young native of Brittany, who had stopped on the threshold, fearing to walk forward.

"What! viscount," he said, "you do us the injustice to present yourself like a stranger, through a letter of credit? Fortunately, I caught sight of your name on reading it, and took the liberty of sending for you. I should never have forgiven myself had you left without hearing from me how happy we are to place ourselves entirely at your disposal."

"Excuse me, sir," replied Savinien, amazed by this reception. "I was not aware that you knew me, and I——"

"You mean that you had not yet done us the honour of coming to see us; but your uncle speaks of you in every letter. He announced your coming a week ago, and we were expecting you."

"I was ignorant that my uncle——"

"Had an interest in our house? You surprise me greatly. He has one, and has had it for a long time past. But you remind me that Monsieur de Trémorin is very reserved as regards his business matters," added M. Bouret, with a smile. "I shall imitate him, and confine myself to repeating that we are at your orders."

"I am extremely obliged to you. My uncle told me to hand a private letter to Monsieur Montauron."

"Montauron isn't here. He seldom comes in the morning, but he will be delighted to have you call on him in the Avenue Ruysdaël, close to the Parc Monceau. And, although Monsieur de Trémorin did not send you personally to me, I hope that we shall meet elsewhere than in this office. I flatter myself that I may be able to put you in the way of enjoying yourself, for I have remained a bachelor, and I suppose that you have come to Paris to have a gay time of it. It belongs to your age rather than mine to do so; but I have not unharnessed yet, and you may see that in spite of my forty-two years I am lively enough still."

"I do not doubt it, sir," replied Savinien, quite bewildered by these singular offers of service; "but it is not only to amuse myself that my uncle sent me away for six months."

"Good! uncles never do, but it is understood all the same. Yours has too much experience not to know that a young man cannot live here like a hermit. He has opened a credit of six thousand francs to begin with, but he means to renew it next month."

"I think not. He told me, on the contrary, that it must suffice me."

"Then you are really serious in asking to-day for only fifty louis?"

"Yes, indeed. I shall draw out that amount every month."

"You may take what you please, and what you draw shall figure on my personal account. It would look bad if the Viscount d'Amaulis, the Baron de Trémorin's nephew, should be obliged to apply to usurers to pay a betting or a gambling debt. But we are talking standing and that is very tiresome. Be kind enough to sit down, pray, and let me take your parcel which seems to be very heavy."

"My parcel? Yes," replied Savinien, who had scarcely expected to be questioned as to the famous casket by this agreeable and somewhat over-familiar gentleman.

He would have preferred to have spoken about it to a subordinate who would have said merely yes or no, without taking the liberty to interro

gate him, while the under-manager of the Provincial Bank might perhaps ply him with questions.

"Is this a deposit to be made with us?" resumed M. Bouret, laughing.

"Exactly," replied the viscount, profiting by this unexpected opening.

"You could not find a better place; our house has a special place for deposits, and we have organised an ingenious way of installing them, such indeed as you will not find elsewhere. Shall I show you our contrivance?"

"I should be very glad to know what it is."

"Well then, it is this: at the Bank of France, and elsewhere, deposits are only received if open. You want to deposit silver or diamonds, let us say. The silver is weighed, the stones are estimated, and an engagement is made to give you, in case they should be lost, an amount equal to the estimate. We do better than that. We don't care to see; you bring us a case as big as a wardrobe, or a box that you can hold in your hand; we take it without troubling ourselves about what it contains. Still, we guarantee its safety?"

"But if a casket which is empty or filled with sand or pebbles were brought to you, what then?"

"That does not concern us. We return the casket as received."

"But should it be lost, what would you do?"

"That is impossible. You will soon understand that when you see our safety-locks. Have you any time at your disposal?"

"Not much. I am expected elsewhere at noon."

"You have still forty minutes, then. That will suffice to visit our vaults. Besides, it is necessary for you to go down to them as you are going to make a deposit. With us, the person making the deposit locks it up himself. You will see why this is necessary. What is the object which you wish to deposit?"

"It is this," replied Savinien, unfolding the paper which enveloped the casket.

"Very good. It will not fill the compartment which we shall assign to you."

"The compartment?"

"Explanations only detain us. I will show the place to you."

"Oh! I ask all this because the casket does not belong to me. It has been left in my care, and, as I am staying at a hotel, I do not wish to keep it by me."

"You are quite right. You don't, then, know the value of the contents?"

"No, not at all. There may be nothing but papers in the casket, although that seems unlikely, from the weight of it."

"It doesn't matter. This isn't the first time that we have taken charge of papers—letters, for instance, and some are very precious," added M. Bouret, with a knowing smile. "Love letters, for instance, or compromising documents,—we receive them with our eyes shut. It is likely that some compartments in our vaults hide family secrets, and I assure you that they are safer there than anywhere else. Now we have only to go down. I will send word by telephone to the clerk, who will prepare your subscription card, and to the servant who is at the gate of the vaults."

With this M. Bouret took up the mouthpiece of one of Edison's ingenious contrivances, and began a conversation with one of his distant subordinates.

While he was applying his lips and ears alternately to the orifice of the

tube, Savinien had an opportunity to look at the financier, who did not in the least correspond with the idea he entertained as to the head of a banking-house. M. Bouret was tall, with a good figure, and dressed with taste and elegance. He wore a slight black moustache, and little whiskers shaved at the ear-line. His face was open and intelligent, his eyes quick, and his motions easy. He appeared scarcely thirty-five.

In the country a banker is almost always a serious and majestic individual, easily to be mistaken for a magistrate.

"If Monsieur Montauron resembles his partner," thought Savinien, "the Provincial Bank is ruled by swells. This under-manager looks like a gay fellow."

"It is done," said M. Bouret, turning round. "There is some one now making a deposit, but he has almost finished. The place will be free. Come, viscount."

Savinien, with his casket under his arm, silently followed in the wake of the obliging manager, who insisted upon personally doing the honours of the establishment and its curiosities. M. Bouret descended a staircase reserved for his special use, and led the young native of Brittany, in the first place, to an office on the ground floor, where Savinien saw an individual almost as handsomely attired as his superior.

"At Saint Malo, counter jumpers wear false sleeves of green alpaca," thought Savinien. "This house must have a great deal of money to employ fellows who dress like dandies."

"Be good enough to give the Viscount d'Amaulis his subscription card," said M. Bouret to his subordinate.

This was done at once. Savinien received a sort of ticket bearing his name and a number. He was utterly ignorant of the use to be made of this card, but refrained from asking premature questions. After this transient pause M. Bouret resumed his course down some stairs which led to the depths of the vaults, and Savinien followed him.

The subterranean journey interested him. It was novel to him, coming from a château where the cellars only served to keep a few hogsheads of burgundy and several barrels of cider.

He had expected to be astonished by the sight of piles of gold, or, at least, of bags containing the precious metal; of rivers of diamonds, and showers of pearls, and said to himself that his coffer would make a poor show among such treasures, but after going down thirty steps or so, he found himself before a grating, behind which there was a robust young man in the livery worn by the subordinate retainers of the bank. This man, an overseer, bowed respectfully, and removed his cap on seeing M. Mouret.

"There is a depositor in the vault, sir," said he, "but he will soon be out again."

"Let us wait, then," said M. Bouret, addressing Savinien. "We are not in the habit of disturbing our customers while they are here. It won't take long, and, in the meantime, I will explain how things are done. You see the vault running along by the second grating there?"

Savinien saw a long vaulted hall brilliant with gas-lights, and upon the white walls he espied symmetrical rows of plates which looked like black spots. The entrance to this place was protected by two gratings several yards apart.

"It looks solid, doesn't it?" said M. Bouret. "It is built of Roman cement, and defies pickaxe, pickpoint, and fire. It may be inundated or

ed with sand in case of an attack from outside. Do you think that ur casket will be safe enough?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! Will it be alone! I don't see a single box."

"There are some here, however, and I will show you presently where ey are kept. Now, look over there. What do you see?"

"Two men, one of them running his hands along the wall."

"That is the depositor. He is just closing his compartment."

Savinien did not understand; but, on more attentively examining the rsons at the end of the hall, whose backs were turned towards him, he as very much surprised to see that the taller one wore a long overcoat mmed with fur, precisely like that of the traveller whose early parture had so greatly distressed the veiled lady.

"I must be wrong," thought Savinien; "the neighbour who caused me ch annoyance of all kinds last night and this morning, is now travelling the Northern line. He cannot be here, as he has started for Sweden."

"Did that gentleman bring a friend with him?" asked M. Bouret of e overseer.

"No, sir;" replied the man, in a respectful tone, "he came with a rter. The chest which he had to deposit was so heavy that he uld not carry it himself, and I was even obliged to help the porter to place in the compartment."

"Is the gentleman one of our old customers?"

"No, sir; he is a new one."

"You see, viscount, that our system gains in favour. There is no day which we don't let one or more compartments."

"Ah! you call that 'letting?'"

"Yes, that is the word; we let out, for more or less time, the privilege using a compartment, in which people may place anything that they sire."

"Then I shall be your 'tenant,'" said Savinien, smiling.

"Exactly; and we shall be proud to have you, as you may write and l your uncle."

"I shall tell him of the cordial reception which you have given me, t——"

"Good! I conjecture what you wish to say. You prefer that nsieur de Trémorin should not know your private affairs. We under- nd that, and you may rely on our discretion. This vault is the tomb secrets."

"It is indeed a tomb. Those arches and lamps——"

"Ah, the gentleman is ringing to have the gate opened for him to go . It is our turn at last. I beg your pardon for having detained you: we strictly adhere to our rules. Every subscriber has a right to ain alone until he finishes his business."

The overseer, while his superior was speaking, unlocked the door so as allow the depositor to depart, and he advanced, followed by a railway ter. Savinien now saw the gentleman distinctly, and the more he xed at him, the more he seemed to him to be the same man who at five the morning had crossed the court-yard of the hotel. He could not re nise him by his face, as he had seen only his back from the window; the costume was absolutely the same. Everything was there, over- t, cap, and furred boots.

This strange individual might be about forty-five years old and he an unpleasant face. His eyes and nose reminded one of a bird of

prey. His heavy eyebrows met, and he wore a full beard, thick and jet black, such as is never seen in Sweden. His look was haughty, almost insolent. He passed before the viscount and the sub-director without even touching his fur cap.

The porter was more polite however, and when he raised his cap Savinien saw that it was marked with the letter N.

"Decidedly," muttered he, "it is the traveller of No. 26. The hotel keeper told me that he had taken the Northern line, and it is evident that this man now comes from the terminus, and has had his baggage brought here by a man in the employ of the company."

"Do you know that eccentric-looking individual?" asked M. Bouret seeing how inquisitively Savinien looked at the stranger.

"No, but I should like to know his name."

"Nothing easier. As we go up we will ask the clerk who gives out the tickets. May I ask, however, why you wish to know it?"

"Oh, it is merely for curiosity's sake. The gentleman resembles some one who was staying at the hotel where I have put up, and who left this morning, saying that he was about to leave Paris."

"He looks as though he intended doing so, as he is dressed for travelling. People do not wrap themselves up like that in the month of April unless they are going to travel."

"That is true, and I am wondering why he has come to the vaults of the Provincial Bank."

"That is easy to see. He doesn't wish to carry about a chest full of valuables, and has come here to store it away safely."

"He ought to have done so before."

"Certainly, but some persons leave everything till the last moment. Here, there is very little formality, and the gentleman probably knew that he wouldn't be long about the matter. But we are losing time, viscount; let us go on, if you please."

The man with the furred boots had disappeared up the staircase, and Savinien, who did not intend to run after him, although much puzzled by the encounter, followed without any more delay the obliging financier who served him as guide.

"Be kind enough," said M. Bouret, "to examine the distribution of the vaults. You see the molten plates on the walls?"

"Yes, what purpose do they serve?"

"These plates are doors which hermetically close a cavity in the body of the wall Have you ever travelled in Spain?"

"Never," answered Savinien, with surprise. "I know only Brittany and Paris."

"I ask you this, because in Spain the singular practice exists of placing the dead in the walls of cemeteries instead of burying them. We follow a similar course; but, instead of placing coffins in our compartments, our subscribers leave chests and caskets like yours in them, or bags and baskets, if such be their fancy."

"Each person has his own compartment, then?"

"His own private and personal compartment; so long as he pays the rent no one can open it."

"No one except yourself, I suppose, or Monsieur Montauron.'

"No one. Neither the director nor myself. You will see that it would be impossible to do so. Be good enough to show me the number upon your ticket."

"It is 919," replied Savinien, having glanced at his card.

"All right! Let us go on. Look for the plate bearing that number. ou see there is a row of tablets arranged in order. All those before hich we are now passing close a compartment already filled. Ah! re is yours."

"The key is in the lock."

"Certainly. When you have made your deposit you must have the key hand; your take it away with you after locking up. Observe that all e doors of the vacant compartments near by also have their keys."

"Yes, and those of the ones already let haven't."

"Yes, all the compartments on that side are filled, as far as the one tended for you. We let them in regular order. The gentleman who posited that chest immediately before you has No. 918, and like those fore him he has taken away his key. The one coming after you will be 0."

"Very well, I understand. So it is there that the chest is placed, hich the man with the hook nose had brought here by a porter," mut- red Savinien, as he examined with anxious attention the tablet num- red 918.

"Yes, you will be neighbours. Your casket will be near his chest, but u won't meet here again. It is quite exceptional that we should have esented ourselves at the gateway before he had finished what he was out, and, observe we did not pass it. Now, viscount, I take the key and en, as you see. Note that ten caskets like yours would set easily in is hollow, as it is much deeper than its width."

"A man might lie in there," exclaimed Savinien.

"Yes, if he were not too big," replied M. Bouret, laughing. "Put in ur casket, if you please. There now, it is done! Now look at these ur brass knobs projecting outside."

"Oh! I know their purpose. My uncle has a safe with a combination- k like this. Each knob corresponds with the alphabetical letters, and all of them being turned a word of four letters is formed. A screw is en pressed inside and the chosen word immediately becomes the 'Open same!' of the 'Arabian Nights.' You close the door, efface the word turning the knobs back, and in order to open the door again the word ist be known. The key does not work unless the letters are put in their ces."

"I need not tell you, then, what you have to do. Choose a word, re- mber it, and work the knobs. I will go a few steps off and look towards e gateway. You must not let me see the word. Our entire system rests on the fact that only the depositor can open his compartment. When he shes to do so, or to see that it is secure, he has only to ask for the clerk om you already saw, show his card and enter the vault, where the erseer, apprised of his coming by telephone, lets him enter alone. No e looks on, and he may take out a part of his valuables or add ers."

"The system is admirable; but supposing the card with the number of compartment were lost the finder could use it."

"He wouldn't know the word, viscount, and as he could not guess it, I y him to touch the deposit. I will now turn my back to you. Think some word, if you please; form it, efface it, and take out the key."

Savinien thought of his cousin's name; and as it comprised too ny letters for four knobs, he used only the first four. "It is done,"

said Savinien, after having effaced the letters forming the masculine name Yvon, there being no room to form the much sweeter one of Yvonne.

"Very well," said the agreeable under-manager; "now, viscount, you are at home. The entry will be free to you whenever you wish, and you won't need to have me with you. But I should be obliged if you would be kind enough to return to my office now. It is I who looks over letters of credit accounts. And that reminds me that I kept your letter up-stairs and that you have not received the thousand francs which you require. Excuse my blunder. It is easily repaired, and to save you the trouble of going up stairs, I will, if you like, send it down to you, providing you give me a few minutes."

"Thank you, sir," said Savinien, who had just glanced at his watch; "but it is almost noon and I am obliged to leave you. I can easily do without the money to-day, and——"

"Well, I will send you the money and the letter of credit. They shall be at your hotel before evening, if you wish."

"That is quite unnecessary, sir. I will call to-morrow, if you will allow me. And now I must say good morning. I am awaited elsewhere."

"Then I will not insist upon keeping you. No doubt you will have agreeable company at breakfast. I wish that I were in your place, but my duties keep me here till five o'clock. Everything falls upon me when Monsieur Montauron is not here, and I must say that he doesn't appear often. However, I make up for all this in the evening."

"May I ask you at what time I should be likely to find Monsieur Montauron at home?"

"It is hard to say. Montauron has been going about a great deal lately. But call in the morning and you will be likely to find him. I will tell him that you intend to call, and he will probably invite you to dinner. You had better accept. He has an excellent cook, and will introduce you to his wife, who is charming. Now, good morning, viscount, and merry moments to you! How lucky you are to breakfast with ladies! Those breakfasts are going out of fashion. Our pretty women generally get up now at such late hours. If you could restore the agreeable habits of my youth I should be infinitely obliged to you."

"I am only going to breakfast with a gentleman friend."

"Excuse me, then. I thought seeing you in such a hurry——"

"I mustn't keep him waiting, as he is obliged to be on 'Change.'

"He's right. There'll be money made there to-day, and if you would take a hint from me—but no, your friend can advise you as well as I; he is in business, I suppose?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him for years, and only found him again yesterday."

"Excuse the liberty I take if I ask his name."

"He is named George Fougeray."

"Ah, indeed! He is a very smart man."

"You know him?"

"I know everybody. If I ask this question, which may appear a freedom, it is in your interest. You have just come to Paris, and not knowing one man from another, you might have fallen into bad hands. But Fougeray is in a good position, and very well known. He may be useful to you."

"I am greatly obliged to you, sir, for your views regarding him, and

nave the honour of wishing you good morning," replied Savinien, who
t somewhat piqued.

Still he allowed M. Bouret to shake hands with him in the warmest
nner, and to accompany him to the foot of the main staircase, which
mounted rapidly, to prevent the agreeable financier from taking the
ouble to accompany him further. This staircase had a landing com-
nicating with the grand hall. Savinien crossed this hall, now more
owded than before, and went out.

He was anxious to breathe the fresh air. The vaults were disagreeable
him, and the noise of the busy crowd in the hall half stunned him. He
gan to walk up the Avenue de l'Opéra, but had scarcely taken ten
ps when he thought of going back again. The man with the furred
ots was uppermost in his mind, and he remembered that he had for-
tten to ask his name of the clerk who gave out the tickets.

It was rather late to repair this mistake, however. M. Bouret must
ve returned to his office: the viscount did not care to disturb him, and
uld not question the subordinate except in his presence. Besides, after
, what did it matter to Yvonne's cousin if the depositor whom he
d encountered was the gentleman who had left the hotel so early and
lled himself Count Aparanda?

Savinien hoped to hear no more of him or of the strange woman who
d got him into such a strait. He had freed himself of his responsibility
getting rid of the casket, and he said to himself that if the lady
claimed it there would be nothing further to do than simply remove it
om the vaults of the Provincial Bank.

"She cannot find fault with me," thought he. "I could not have done
tter: her secret is guarded like a treasure." And he resumed his walk
wards the Bourse.

Following the Rue du Quatre-Septembre, which led to the temple
speculation, he reflected upon the interview, which he had just had
th M. Bouret, and wondered why that gentleman had welcomed him so
armly. It is not customary to make so much of the bearer of a letter of
edit for a paltry six thousand francs, and the title of viscount is not one
dazzle the lords of gold. Could it be that his uncle Trémorin had a
rge interest in the banking house? This seemed unlikely, for Savinien
as not aware that M. de Tremorin possessed any other fortune than his
nds in Brittany, which brought him, whether times were good or bad,
me thirty thousand francs yearly. It is true that this amount was not
pended at Plouer, and that the baron might have laid by some money in
irty years.

"Upon my word," said Savinien to himself, "I should be glad of it
r Yvonne's sake, and I don't know why I shouldn't take advantage of
e good wishes of these gentlemen to enliven my stay in Paris. Monsieur
uret does not exactly please me. He throws himself too much at one's
ad, and I shall be careful not to make use of the unlimited credit he
fered. I shan't care for his company when I want to enjoy myself.
eorge is enough for me. Monsieur Montauron must be another sort of
an, however. He is married and lives in style. If he receives me as
easantly as his partner has done, I shall be on visiting terms with him,
d I will gladly avail myself of the opportunity to see a little of the
ancial world. My uncle advised me to see everything. I shall obey him.
ut I shan't fail to be cautious, for six thousand francs won't go very far.
ese people talk about millions just as we talk of crowns in Brittany."

The Rue du Quatre-Septembre was long, but it appeared short to Savinien, so busy was his mind. Twelve had struck at the clock of the Bourse when he found himself in front of the door of Champeaux' restaurant where his friend was waiting for him. The street was crowded, and he had some trouble in gliding through the number of vehicles encumbering it in all directions. The room which he now entered proved no less noisy than the street. All the tables were occupied, and it was necessary for him to open a way through groups of people breakfasting, in order to reach the spot where George was seated finishing a dozen of oysters. On catching sight of Savinien, Fougeray abruptly exclaimed: "My dear boy, I began without you; you must catch up with me, and you had better swallow two mouthfuls at a time, as we have only half an hour."

"Why are you in such a hurry?" asked Savinien.

"Didn't I tell you this morning on the boulevard? To-day is the great encounter. The battle of liquidation, in a word. There will be something new. The day will be a brisk one, and you could not have a better one to begin looking into matters a little."

"But why should I do so? Did you imagine that I came to Paris to speculate on 'Change?"

"You play baccarat."

"That isn't the same thing. I know nothing about stock-gambling, and I have no money to speculate with."

"Nonsense! you wouldn't be sorry to win a few thousands."

"I should be very sorry to lose them."

"You wouldn't lose them. I only operate on a sure basis. I will explain all that to you presently. Let us breakfast first and then rush off. I ordered for two —chops, eggs, and truffles, and here are your oysters. Let us begin and pour out some of this delicate Grave wine."

Savinien, who was as hungry as a hawk, did not need to be urged.

"Well," asked George, after a moment, "did you find Montauron?"

"No; but I saw the under-manager of the Provincial Bank, who received me as if I had been a prince."

"You are a viscount. That is quite enough for Bouret, who, being a parvenu, adores titles."

"Ah, he is a parvenu, then?"

"Yes, indeed! He began without a copper. But he is very smart."

"That is exactly what he says of you."

"You told him, then, that you knew me?"

"Yes. Do you object to that?"

"Not the least in the world. But let me ask how you came to mention me."

"I don't know exactly how it happened. Ah! I was saying that I was expected by a friend who was going on 'Change, and he asked who it was."

"That doesn't surprise me. The fellow meddles with everything. I'll wager that he offered you the favour of his company to enable you to 'see life.'"

"He offered me a great deal more. He put his private purse at my disposal. He probably imagines that my uncle has a large fortune, which will come to me some day or other."

"I suppose that is it. I'll wager that your uncle is much richer than you suppose, for Bouret never does anything without a motive. If he offered to lend you some money, it is because he knows perfectly well that

aron de Trémorin is to be depended upon, and wouldn't leave his nephew n an awkward position. Your uncle must have a large amount invested n the Provincial Bank."

"I thought the same. But I don't see how he could have made any rge investments unknown to any of his family."

"My dear boy, all country people have a mania for economising and elling no one what they do with their savings. Your uncle is a man of ne sort."

"I grant it. I admit that he must have a reserve fund, but I don't elieve that he is a shareholder to any large amount in a banking house f such importance."

"You don't understand these things. In the first place, the Provinial Bank isn't so grand as all that, and, besides, even the most important nancial concerns don't scorn the money of small landholders, and when ne latter invest large sums, they have a way of making much of nem, as is only fair. It is strange you should be so surprised that your ncle may be interested in a Parisian bank. You are wrong; it only roves that he is more clever than most of his neighbours."

"I believe that, but I wonder how he can have amassed a sum of any onsequence to such a banking-house as that of Monsieur Montauron's."

"My dear fellow, I see that you haven't the least idea of compound nterest. What is your uncle's income."

"Thirty thousand francs a year, derived from land."

"Excellent! At the rate at which you manage matters down there in Brittany, already that means a capital of six or seven hundred thousand rancs or more. But Monsieur de Trémorin does not want to sell, and he s right. Land doesn't go down like stocks. How long has he owned his property?"

"Thirty years at least."

"Very good. Let me calculate. How much does he spend a year?"

"Upon my word, I don't know. He lives handsomely, but not xtravagantly."

"And scarcely ever travels. I calculate his expenses, then, at twelve housand francs or less. When he is at home in the country, he has only is clothes to buy The land keeps the master, the servants, and the orses. There would then remain eighteen thousand francs' savings every ear. Do you know how much time is required to double capital when he interest is undisturbed?"

"No, I don't. I have not the slightest idea."

"What did you learn, then, at college? I knew that before I left my irst school. Well, then, it takes fourteen years, and no longer."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Savinien.

"It is as I have the honour of informing you. Eighteen thousand rancs at the end of thirty years give seventy-two thousand francs. And this pretty little sum having been renewed every year during the ame lapse of time, your uncle must own twelve to fifteen hundred housand francs at least."

"Don't tell me that. Your arithmetic makes my head giddy."

"My arithmetic is correct. I am sure that if Montauron told you he truth about the money invested by Baron de Trémorin in the Provincial Bank you would see that I am not far from the facts. Your ncle would, however, have double that amount if he had given his funds o an intelligent man, an active one, like myself, to turn over."

"No doubt, but——"

"Oh, I do not say that in order that you should induce him to reinvest his cash in that way. My own affairs are enough for me. But do you know, I think his daughter must be a pretty good match."

"Yes, even without the fortune you attribute to her. She has attractions enough without a dowry."

"Granted. It is understood that you are going to marry her, is it not?"

"Understood is not the word. The marriage has been talked of, and will possibly take place. I admit that I wish it."

"You are right, perhaps—although I think that you would find a better match in Paris."

"I! you forget that I have only six thousand francs a year, and have made no sort of investment in the whole course of my life."

"Your uncle must have invested for you. He is your guardian, if I am not mistaken."

"Yes, I was only twelve years old when I had the misfortune to lose my father."

"Then Baron de Trémorin has managed your affairs for nine years, and your education never cost six thousand francs a year. Did he give you any account of his guardianship when you came of age?"

"He offered to do so, but I did not desire it. Business bores me, and he has consented to manage everything for me."

"So that, if to-morrow or any day you needed a hundred louis, you would be obliged to ask them of him, like some schoolboy going to get money to buy buns?"

"But I hope never to need as much, or even a less amount. I make no calculation for unexpected expenses."

"You talk like a boy, as you are, but you will soon change your tone. I will undertake to teach you music of another sort, and, as I don't wish to have your uncle finding fault with me, I will make you pocket some money this very day."

"Much obliged," quickly responded Savinien; "I don't wish to risk losing any, and if, as I presume, you allude to stock operations— —"

"What do you take me for, you great simpleton? Do you think that I would let you into anything that wasn't sure and safe? There, now! here is the very thing! Do you see that tall man coming towards us?"

"The one with a decoration in his buttonhole?"

"Yes, my friend! At twenty-seven, it is very agreeable to be decorated like that, especially when one isn't a military man. Now, let me speak to him for three seconds, and after that I shall know whether I may plunge in."

With these words George Fougeray rose up, extended his hand to the new-comer, and greeted him with a smile. He took him aside, under an orange tree set in a tub, two paces away, and they began talking in a low tone.

Savinien, who had finished eating his truffled eggs, poured out a final glass of Grave to while the time away, and furtively examined the young man whom his friend George had greeted with so much eagerness. He was fair, rather good-looking, and not badly built. He was dressed, too, with extreme elegance, and might, at a first glance, have been taken for a man belonging to good society; but, on looking at him a second time, Savinien found his face very unpleasing and his eyes false, without

mentioning that there was a certain awkwardness in his gestures, those of a man too suddenly grown rich.

"He looks like a valet who has made a fortune," thought Viscount d'Amaulis. "How can George care to talk to such a lout?"

The talking did not last long. The gentleman went off without bowing to his companion, and Savinien caught the last words which he uttered: "Go on boldly, and hold on strongly. You shall be backed."

"Be sure about that," answered George. "My tongue isn't in my pocket. Tell the governor that he may rely on me."

Savinien observed that the people seated at the tables near by followed the fair-complexioned young man with their eyes, as he went off with a swagger. Petty clerks, standing behind men who were breakfasting, to take Exchange orders, nudged one another and whispered together as they pointed him out.

"The affair is set going," said George, taking his seat again. "Have some coffee and light your cigar. You can finish it under the colonnade. Moments are golden to-day."

"Who is this gentleman whom every one stared at, and who came expressly to talk to you? A broker?"

"Better than that, my friend. He is the confidant and friend of a man who sets stock rising or falling as he pleases."

"Monsieur de Rothschild, I presume."

"The baron, whom I highly respect, hasn't that power. A man must hold the frying-pan by the handle to be in the way of influencing the market."

"The frying-pan by the handle!" exclaimed Savinien, quite taken aback.

"In other words, one must belong to the Government."

"Is that young fellow in such a position? Is that what you mean?"

"He—he's not such a fool! He is satisfied with executing the commissions given him in high quarters. That is much safer."

"Then, is it because he executes commissions so well that he has been decorated?" asked Savinien, rather ironically.

"You have guessed it," exclaimed George with a laugh, "unless, indeed, he has rendered other services of which I am ignorant. At any rate, they were not in the army. People like Rheinthal don't go into foolish professions."

"What! do you call it foolish to be a soldier?"

"Glorious, but stupid. Such is my opinion."

"It isn't mine," quickly replied the last of the Amaulis: "I assure you that if my uncle hadn't opposed it I should have entered the military school of Saint Cyr. The army was always the choice of members of my family."

"You wouldn't have been engaged to Mademoiselle de Trémorin in that case, for a man cannot with propriety be married till he is a captain at the least, and it would have taken you twelve years to become one. Your cousin wouldn't have waited for you, so you need not regret your epaulets. Before to-night I shall have clearly demonstrated to you that: 'A great man's friendship is a gift from heaven.'"

"I don't understand your quotation in the least."

"You will understand it by and by. Are you ready? Waiter, the bill!"

"Yes, before he brings it, I shall have finished," said Savinien. "What

strange faces one sees here! All these gentlemen breakfasting in this room, and the young fellows swarming about them like flies, have the same faces, black eyes, curly hair, thick lips, and noses like parrots' beaks. One would think it was Judea."

"So it is," replied George, laughing. "You know that if all financiers are not Israelites, all Israelites are financiers."

"It runs in the blood. Their ancestors adored the Golden Calf. I dreamed of it last night. It was no doubt caused by your promise to take me on 'Change to day. Fancy that after I left you this morning I fell asleep in an arm-chair and had the most singular vision, and, besides, an adventure still more extraordinary——"

"You shall tell me all about it at dinner to-night, my dear friend. We have not a moment left to set to work."

"Set to work?" repeated Savinien.

"Yes, my dear fellow. And you shall see how I work. You don't understand anything about it as yet, but you will presently observe that it is a fatiguing but lucrative exercise. The bill is paid, so let us be off."

And without taking the louis which Savinien held out for his own share of the breakfast, Fougeray rose and walked rapidly away. The viscount, who followed, was not a little surprised to see that several of the men with hooked noses accosted George. They had evidently laid in wait for him and taken pains to put themselves in his way. However, Fougeray, without deigning to stop, got rid of them by a gesture which signified: "I don't know anything, or if I do I'm not going to tell it."

Savinien, who overtook him at the door of the restaurant, heard him say to one man more persevering than the rest: "I am not in the secrets of the gods, my good sir. I really wasn't present at the ministerial Council this morning."

"But Rheinthal must have——" began an importunate fellow.

"Rheinthal says that stock is down, and I think so myself."

With this answer, made in a tone of authority, George took his friend's arm, so as to curtail all further inquisitiveness.

"They appear to take you for an oracle," remarked Savinien.

"An oracle at second hand, as it were. They saw me speak for five minutes to Rheinthal, who knows everything about political matters. In fact in one moment everybody on 'Change knew he had seen me. I'll wager that more than one operator will watch my movements. But I am more cunning than the whole lot of them, and by the time they find out what I am about I shall have accomplished my purpose."

"You are going to speculate to-day, then?"

"That's a pretty question! Do you suppose that I am going to pass my time in contemplating the frescoes on the ceiling of the Bourse."

Rather ashamed of his simplicity, the viscount said no more, and suffered himself to be led to the temple where Fortune, the antique divinity, was so ardently worshipped.

A loud clamour could be heard there, for the hour had come. The adoration of the blindfolded goddess was at its height, and it is always a noisy affair.

The faithful who had come late were climbing hastily up the steps in front of the edifice, and a crowd already encumbered the peristyle. Under the colonnades the throng was extremely dense, and inside a vast mob swayed to and fro.

A long line of carriages and cabs stood before the iron railing of the

courtyard; other traps were coming up at every moment, and some fresh speculator or broker, who scarcely gave the vehicle time to stop before alighting, hurried at once into the building. The people swarmed together, ran about, and talked loudly.

"I have never been in Charenton Asylum," said Savinien to himself, "but I imagine that the maniacs in that establishment are not more noisy and extravagant of gesture than these people here. However, I trust that this kind of madness is not catching, and I am not sorry to have a glimpse of a spectacle of which I had no idea."

George did not allow him time for further reflection. "My dear friend," said he, as they walked briskly up the steps, "you are now on the field of battle; the fight is about to begin. Don't leave me if you wish to be entertained; but, no matter what I may say or do, keep discreetly silent. It will be the best for you. I may be obliged to introduce you to some jobbers who are acting on my behalf."

"I don't care to know them," interrupted Savinien.

"I shall merely mention your name. That won't compromise you, and may be of service to me. I will tell you why when the day is over."

"If my name can be of service to you, that alters the case. But——"

"I only ask one thing of you—say nothing. You will be taken for a capitalist making a first appearance on 'Change, and anxious to see how things go; that is what I wish people to think."

"What I wish, for my part, is merely to look on. As for gambling——"

Fougeray did not notice this protest, however, for the middle of the flight of steps was hardly reached ere he was greeted by three clerks who had seen him arrive, and who rushed down to meet him. Savinien, who had dropped George's arm without leaving him, heard these hurried words: "Well, how about Rheinthal?"

"I have seen him at Champeaux'."

"It is already known up stairs. Little Koenigstein left the restaurant expressly to spread the news."

"Good! then the soil is ready; we have only to work it. Act quickly. Sell three hundred thousand."

"What a start!"

"We are two," said George, glancing towards Savinien. "The three hundred thousand are for us. But everybody must go on. I have orders up to nine hundred thousand."

"Excellent! What is the news you have?"

"A threatening message from Prussia as regards the expedition to Tunis. That is the theme. Play upon it. How much was the opening?"

"Eighty-two thirty-five." *

"Well, when it is down to ninety-two, we will see. Go on, my lads. And don't keep your tongues in your pockets."

The clerks flew off like sparrows, and George again took Savinien's arm to ascend the remaining steps.

"Have we really any serious difficulties with Prussia!" asked the viscount.

"Very serious. War is perhaps at hand."

"The deuce! If it broke out my stay in Paris would be shortened. I should have to join my regiment, and I shouldn't be sorry to do so."

* For the benefit of the unsophisticated reader it may be as well to mention that this means the opening quotation of French Three per Cent. Rentes on that particular day.—*Trans.*

"What an eager warrior! We haven't got so far as that yet. Be content, just now, with looking at the battle for money. You won't be wounded, I promise you, and you will see how amusing it is."

On reaching the colonnade, George turned to the left and went to post himself advantageously at the northern corner.

"Aren't you going in?" asked Savinien, who was still near him.

"Why should I? I have my place which everybody knows, and I can assure you that people will find me. Go in if you like. You will see a rough hustling. I warn you, however, that you will be sorely elbowed."

"Oh! I don't care to go in, and shall keep near you unless I am in your way."

"You are not, if you don't keep too near. I shall be closely surrounded, and must be able to move freely."

"Be sure that I shall keep at a respectful distance from your person. I don't wish to be taken for a gambler in stock."

The occasion for retreating soon presented itself. Fougeray had no sooner installed himself in his accustomed place than he became the centre of a circle. His appearance attracted at least a dozen gentlemen, who knew him to be well informed. Savinien drew back a little, and fixed his eyes upon the trees, which were beginning to sprout above the sanded walk running round the building.

"What! here already, viscount?"

Savinien turned. Nothing could have surprised him more than to be spoken to by a speculator on 'Change, for he knew no one likely to be there. His astonishment diminished somewhat, however, when he found himself face to face with M. Bouret, who as a financier necessarily frequented the place.

"Yes, sir," replied the viscount with some embarrassment; "I came with my friend, George Fougeray, and I didn't expect to have the pleasure of seeing you here."

"I come seldom," replied the under-manager of the Provincial Bank; "but there are occasions when it is necessary to appear in person to watch over important interests. Your uncle—our shareholders, I should say—would think it strange if I did not appear on the ground on a day like this."

"I do not know how much truth there is in the rumours that are afloat—it is said that there will be war with Prussia."

"Yes, that hoax has been about since half past eleven. I know whence it came and don't think it will take. But it has set all our people going to such an extent that Montauron, who does not like to give himself any trouble, had to come here in person and plunge into the vortex. He is here now."

"I should be glad to profit by this chance of being introduced to him—the more as I am simply idling here—a mere spectator. I never entered the Bourse before."

"You will return; but I am very sorry that I cannot just now present you to our director. He wished to talk to our brokers himself, and he must now be in the centre of the hall, which it would be impossible to reach. A man must have ribs of iron not to be crushed in the crowd. I would willingly do all in my power for you, but I am expected at the Provincial Bank, and haven't a moment. I told Montauron of your coming this morning, and he expects an early visit from you. Excuse me if I leave you, viscount. Good-day, till I see you again! Ah!" resumed the busy

financier, suddenly retracing his steps, "one bit of advice. I don't know what your friend Fougeray argues from this beginning; but if you are going to operate, remember that there will be a rise towards the last."

"Oh! I am not going to speculate," promptly replied Savinien, resuming his wonted strain.

M. Bouret did not wait for his reply, however: in fact he had already gone. Savinien, without leaving his post, saw him cross the sidewalk and climb into an elegant victoria. The horse darted off like an arrow shot from a bow.

Meanwhile, George was talking in the centre of a group, to which new comers were constantly added.

Savinien, faithful to his agreement, took care not to go too near, but he caught stray words, which were absolutely meaningless to him. The dialogues were brief, and the speakers talked so rapidly that they seemed to be making use of negro dialect, or the shortened words of telegraphic despatches. Sometimes, however, men came up all out of breath, and clearly articulated in French, and at the top of their voices, such news as the following: "The Prussian fleet is in the port of Kiel ready to sail."

"There is a very startling despatch. I have just seen some one who saw it."

"Stock is down as low as it can be."

"In five minutes it will be below eighty-two."

George smiled, said some word or made some sign, and the messenger returned to plunge again into the furnace, which was at full blast, to judge at least by the noise it made.

"It is strange," thought Viscount d'Amaulis, "that they should bring bad news and look pleased at it. If all this is true it will be bad for our country. I shall never understand all this, and it is quite useless for George to try to teach me."

Other men, less flurried, now passed with memorandum-books in their hands, and glanced at the speculators of their acquaintance, as they mentioned some figure in a dry tone, without comment, and quite certain as to being understood.

At first they paid no attention to Savinien. The face of the fair-haired young man leaning against the stone balustrade was unknown to them, and they had no time to lose. However, some who had seen him chatting familiarly with M. Bouret did not fail, when the capitalist went off, to stop for a second before Savinien, and announce the quotations, to which the young native of Brittany replied by a "Thank you," which threw them into speechless amazement. They were not, it was easy to see, used to these futile civilities.

"They take me for a gambler in stock, that is clear," thought Savinien. "I have a great mind to go away. Their opinion of me is simply humiliating. I cannot go off, however, without a word to George, who isn't thinking of me at all, just now, any more than of the most perfect stranger. If he doesn't come away from that crowd in fifteen minutes' time, I shall bow myself out. I don't find it amusing standing under this classic colonnade."

The reflections of Yvonne's cousin were at this moment interrupted by a person of somewhat mean appearance, who had been buzzing about him for some minutes, and who finally accosted him with—"That good Bouret thinks that everything will run up, and I think he's mistaken. What do you think?"

"I don't think anything at all," replied the viscount, eyeing this individual from head to foot, "and I am not called upon to tell you what Monsieur Bouret thinks, either."

"Oh, don't get into a rage! What I say is to prevent you from making a mistake; I never saw you here before, and I take an interest in new-comers."

Savinien was about to fly into a perfect passion, but George Fougeray came up suddenly, and pulling him by the sleeve, drew him into the circle round himself.

"Galipot, my dear fellow," said he, addressing a very fat, florid man, who had not left him for a moment since he had taken up his position "here is the friend I spoke of, Viscount d'Amaulis, a landowner in Brittany."

"And the nephew of Baron de Trémorin, if I am not mistaken," said M. Galipot, in a hoarse voice."

"Monsieur de Trémorin is my uncle," said Savinien, with a frown; "and if you will tell me how my near relationship to him can possibly be of any interest to you——"

"No matter, that is enough," pantingly interrupted the corpulent individual.

At this Savinien fairly lost his self control. "Come, sir," cried he, "explain——"

"Be still!" interrupted George Fougeray, in an undertone. "After 'Change I will give you any explanations you wish, but I beg of you not to attempt to understand me now, and to say as little as possible while we are at work. Be quiet, if you have any regard for me! I am playing my ultimatum to-day."

"Then let me go. I don't like these people, and shall only do you harm without intending it."

"Go, then; I will soon join you at a place which I will point out to you, Do you see that confectioner's—over——"

Savinien waited for the conclusion of the sentence, but it did not come. George was no longer looking in the same direction. His eyes were directed towards the Rue de Richelieu, and his attention was concentrated upon an open carriage which had just turned the corner of the Rue de la Bourse.

"The signal," said he, between his teeth. "The deuce, it is too soon! Those people don't know what they are about!" Then turning round, and without paying any more attention to Savinien than if that useful friend had been far away at Plouër. "Where do you stand?" cried he, in a sharp, clear voice.

"Eighty-two offered," replied, in chorus, two or three clerks, emerging from the main hall.

"Now is the time," said George, in the ear of his faithful jobber; "set everybody going; every second is worth ten thousand at least."

"How much do we buy?" asked Galipot, curtly.

"Double the other amount."

"That is rather stiff. But I'll do it."

"All right. In five minutes the despatch will be posted up; we shall have a full hour to work the rise, and before half-an-hour it will be in full swing. But I'll help you. There's work for two!"

Galipot was already hurrying at full speed towards the entrance, like a ball set rolling. Fougeray rushed after him, saying to the viscount by

ay of farewell: "At the confectioner's—over there—you know! I shall e there at two-twenty, and you won't be sorry if you wait for me."

"The devil take him with his brokers and his pie-shops!" muttered vinien, stupefied. "Is he making fun of me, sending me to eat cakes hile he plays the juggler with rise and fall? I am going to take a cab nd make my calls in the Rue de Varennes and the Rue de Grenelle aint-Germain."

He was going toward the steps when he suddenly saw, at ten steps om him, a face which made him abruptly pause. It was that of a entleman who came out of the hall just as George went in and who opped near the door. He had with him a number of persons who formed circle about him as he paused. Their eagerness testified to the financial tatus of this individual, who was talking with grave gestures and the ecided manner of a man accustomed to be listened to with respect. The eference of those about him showed that his opinion had weight with ess important speculators.

However, it was neither his manner nor his surroundings that interested Viscount d'Annaulis. Savinien was that day pursued by resemblances, and he thought that, from a distance, this gentleman had the ame figure and features as the persecutor of the veiled lady, as that ealous and angry husband, who at half-past eleven had still been watching or his wife in a by-street near the Rue du Helder.

"Ah! soliloquised Savinien, "I thought that fellow was a moneyed nan; he looked and acted like one. He thought fit to quiet down when mentioned my name! That's exactly like some financier who does not vant to quarrel, and who keeps his temper under all circumstances. Business habits make people careful. But I didn't think that he was one of the big men on 'Change. I must go nearer to him to make sure that he is really the door-breaker."

He drew near the group of people who were listening to the speaker, and so near that the latter saw him. There are changes of countenance which are unmistakeable; contractions of the muscles around the mouth, or a transient blush. But the financial magnate did not stir. He did not even interrupt the discourse which he was addressing to his disciples. However, he so placed himself as not to lose sight of the young native of Brittany, who was about to descend the first step of the main flight.

"He does not appear to be angry any longer," muttered the viscount. "He has probably determined to make the best of the matter. Husbands are very easy in Paris. This one's wife has convinced him that he was mistaken. He probably found her at home when he got there. She probably demonstrated that she had not been out of the house this morning, and he probably apologised. I shall certainly not disturb myself about this happy couple. But still I should like to know their name."

And he sought for some pleasant-looking man in the crowd near him, with a view of asking this name. Any number of those who were in the habit of coming to the Bourse must know it. But although there were plenty of people about, they were all too busy for any hope of reply. They did not keep still for a moment, and exchanged rapid words in the slang of the place as they passed along.

However, Savinien saw upon the flight, two or three steps below him, a young man who was making a cigarette, and whose face pleased him.

This incipient broker was of about the same age as the viscount, and looked only too ready to chat.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Savinien, politely raising his hat, "will you be kind enough to tell me the name of that gentleman who is talking away so fast—over there—in the midst of that group."

"With the red nose and English whiskers?"

"Yes."

"That is one of Bismarck's secretaries," replied the young man, with perfect gravity.

"What, sir?"

"He has been sent here by his employer who has bought stock at eighty-two ten, and wants to get rid of it."

Savinien saw that the smiling jester was making fun of him; he turned pale with anger, and was about to speak to him in quite another tone, when a young clerk came up in all haste and, catching the facetious individual by the waist, exclaimed: "What are you doing here? The governor is looking everywhere for you! There's a despatch! It has just been posted up! Come along, you lazy-bones! You have little time left. The prices are running up like mercury. They will be at eighty-three before the close!"

They both set off like pointers after a hare, and were already far off before Viscount d'Amaulis could think of any cutting thing to say in view of punishing the saucy fellow whom he had made the mistake of addressing. They were, indeed, so soon lost in the crowd that Savinien gave up the idea of following them.

"I must have a very countrified appearance to be treated with such impertinence by that scamp," said he, between his teeth. "I won't lose my time running after him, but if I come across him I will teach him manners. What a set, and how I pity George for being thrown into such society! I should never get used to it, and the best thing I can do is to take myself off. I should have been glad to find out the name of the lady's husband—but I give it up—the first attempt is enough. There he is still, he has even come near the steps, and seems to be watching me—this is the best time to be off, as I don't care about entering into any further explanation with him." With this wise resolution, Yvonne's cousin turned his back upon the swarm under the colonnade and descended the steps, thinking of all he had seen and heard.

He was still confused, and went away when the noise was at its height. There was a frightful clamour, and at each moment he was elbowed by people who looked as though they were besieging the place, so hurriedly did they rush up the steps. The words "Despatch!" "Poster!" "Rise!" buzzed in his ears, sometimes accompanied by energetic swearing.

There was evidently something strange going on. Some unforeseen news must have caused all this excitement. Seen from above, the flight of steps resembled an ant-hole into which a stick had been thrust to stir up the insects inside.

Savinien took no notice of the effect caused by the despatch which was noisily announced on all sides, but he thought of his friend who had thrown himself into the midst of the strife, and wondered how he would get out of it. George Fougeray had sufficient experience to navigate among the rocks on which so many speculators come to grief, but there are storms which overturn the best directed vessels, and the squall now brooding over 'Change was no doubt fraught with disaster.

Savinien thought that Fougeray was for "running down," and imagined he had caught alarming information on the wing. "The run is up!" had said the little clerk, before hastening off with the saucy young fellow whose absurd reply had so much annoyed him.

"Who knows whether this rise may not strip George of all he has made in five years?" said the viscount to himself. "I should be very sorry, for I like him very much, frivolous as he is. My uncle would judge him very harshly, but I think that he has remained good hearted and honest in spite of the life he leads, and I should really be showing very little interest in him to abandon him just as he has plunged in up to the neck, as he says he has done. He asked me to wait for half an hour at the confectioner's at the corner. I may as well gratify him, and when I have heard what he has to tell, it will be time enough to call on my relatives in the aristocratic quarter of the city. But why did he choose this shop as a place of meeting? What an idea! I have just left table, and haven't the least wish to eat cake. Bah! I'll take a glass of port, and if George makes me wait too long, I will smoke a cigar outside the establishment, which, by the way, seems to have a good run of custom; there are four or five carriages in front of it now.

Savinien, who had now reached the bottom of the steps, turned round to take a last look at the building where his friend's fate was being decided, and again he saw in the doorway the raging husband, who seemed to be following him with his eyes.

Little did it matter, however, if this man were busying himself about him. Savinien shrugged his shoulders and went his way.

In the depths of his heart he was not only thinking of the danger to George. He had, besides, another anxiety which he did not exactly admit to himself, but which, nevertheless, preyed upon his mind. He remembered certain words which had fallen from his companion—certain changes in his manner when he was at his post under the colonnade, and he asked himself whether this young man, who seemed to be very reckless, had not followed up the idea which had come into his head at the restaurant; whether he had not allowed himself to associate his former schoolmate in his speculations, and that without due authorisation or even telling him of it.

"Why the deuce did he introduce me to that Monsieur Galipot, who looked like a jobber?" said Savinien to himself.

He crossed the street with considerable difficulty, for it was more crowded than ever, and on coming to the confectioner's shop pointed out by George he passed near two gentlemen who were leaving the establishment, and he heard one of them say to the other: "This shop is decidedly the Ladies' Exchange."

The gentlemen passed by, and Savinien, before going in, asked himself what they had meant by these words; though he knew that women were not admitted into the Bourse, and that the interdiction did not prevent them all from speculating in shares of all kinds "quoted" and "unquoted" in the official lists.

A woman of fashion can, without leaving her dressing-room, write to her broker to give him an order to sell or buy, using the same paper as serves her for her love-letters; and, indeed, this is done even by some women of the gay world. Some have speculated wisely, and can reason about "settlings" as clearly as old brokers.

There are also women living on little incomes, door keepers' wives,

retired irregulars, who speculate with eagerness, but in a comparatively small way. These come as far as the rows of trees planted on either side of the edifice, which they have not the right to enter. They may be seen walking under the trees with bags in their hands, chatting with unlicensed brokers, and keeping up mysterious confabulations relating to the stock of some cab company or other.

Women of this class, however, would not dare to show their tawdry shawls in a shop before which, from two till five, so many elegant equipages are seen standing. One of those now drawn up outside was a large open landau with two superb bays, held in check by a coachman in a maroon and gold livery, who sat as solemn and stiff on his box as some judge of an appeal court, his whip resting on his left hip, and his eyes on his horses. Moreover, a footman dressed in the same colours as the coachman stood as motionless as a sentinel at the entrance of the confectionery shop. It was evident than the servants, horses, and carriage, were waiting for their master to drive to the Bois de Boulogne, unless, indeed, the absentee was their mistress.

Savinien had the curiosity to look at the panels, expecting to find a princely or at least a ducal escutcheon. He was not a little surprised, however, to see only some initials interwoven in so complicated a manner that he did not care to take the trouble to decipher them. He would probably have learned nothing by doing so, having too lately arrived in Paris to know the names of such wealthy families as do not figure in the French "Peerage."

"All this," thought he, shaking his head in a pensive manner, "must belong to some *parvenu* who has made millions in speculating. Such people are the most conspicuous now, and nothing is too handsome for them. As I have made up my mind to wait for Fougeray, I shall question him on the point, and he will tell me whom this turn-out belongs to." And in order to keep his promise and satisfy his curiosity, Viscount d'Amaulis then entered the much favoured shop.

It would be more correct to say that he squeezed himself into it, for it was so full that it was difficult to get in at all. There were only women inside, and a great many of them All of them were not young; the middle-aged were even in the majority, but they were invariably stylish-looking, some even handsome, and others pretty. The dresses were all of an elegant description, and in such attire a Parisian woman always looks well, as she knows what is best suited to her own style.

It was very interesting to see these ladies besieging the counter, and with their delicately-gloved fingers pillaging the plates filled with strawberry tarts and sponge-cakes, impregnated with rum. At the end of the shop other groups had gathered in front of a buffet covered with cup-cakes, and a shelf-bracket of white marble, on which stood several large decanters of cut glass. These ladies chattered like jays, and dipped their rosy lips in topaz-hued sherry.

The subject was one for an artist such as those who excel in representing the grand-stand at Longchamp or the beach at Trouville, at the hour when the aristocracy is present.

Leaving aside a few private entertainments given by society at Dinan and St. Malo, the only gatherings of ladies that Savinien had previously witnessed had been those at Dinard during the bathing season, but nothing that he had so far beheld could compare with this basket of animated flowers, which fairly dazzled his eyes. He was neither awkward nor

timid, as a rule, and yet he felt ill at ease in the midst of this elegant throng.

Such groups suited him better than those upon the steps of the Bourse, but it seemed more difficult to mingle with them. It is true that he was the only person of his own sex in the shop, and that the ladies glanced at him in a manner anything but encouraging. They evidently considered him to be a foreigner from some distant spot, a new-comer who had, by chance, lost his way in a place not meant for him, or an indiscreet individual who had come there to spy upon them.

"This is strange," thought he; "most women like eating, but they don't like it so much as to pass their time in nibbling cakes, when it is such fine weather, and the trees in the Champs-Elysées are beginning to show their foliage. Can it be true that I have come upon the 'Ladies' Exchange,' as that gentleman remarked on coming out of here?"

To satisfy himself, he finally ventured to approach the counter, and asked for a seed-cake and a glass of port, which he began to drink slowly, as he glanced out of the corners of his eyes at the ladies around him.

He had no need to study them long to see by their style and manner that they were people of good breeding. Women who belong to the irregular class are in the habit of staring, and if any such had been there they would not have failed to notice a handsome young man who had a look of good blood about him, and also a pocketful of louis, so it might be conjectured. Now, the neighbours of Viscount d'Amaulis did not notice him at all. They had not ceased conversing together, and on listening to them, Savinien heard the sacred words, "taken," "wanted," "in demand," "quoted," "referred," "price current," again and again repeated.

There were even two of these ladies busy with gold and jewelled pencils jotting down figures in memorandum-books bound in ivory. Savinien's mind was made up. These women operated in buying and selling, like the speculators of the sterner sex who were shrieking like madmen under the colonnade. The discovery greatly saddened him.

"It is like my dream," said Yvonne's cousin to himself. "These ladies are worshipping the Golden Calf, and would dance without shame before its image if it were here."

He soon caught whole sentences of their conversation. "You are too late, countess; the stock isn't down any more. I have just seen Rheinthal pass. The trick is played. Everything will run up."

"I have been eleven minutes on the rise. Turning in time is the secret, my dear."

"Ah! you have hit it. I am sometimes obstinate. Last settling-day lost me fifteen hundred louis."

"Invite Rheinthal to your morning-receptions, baroness. No doubt his hair is sandy, and he is wanting in the first rudiments of politeness, but he knows what is going on."

And this countess, who so well understood when to turn in time, now rose and abruptly asked Savinien: "They were at eighty-two forty just now, I believe. Where are they at present?"

"I am absolutely ignorant of it, madame," replied the viscount to this question.

"You didn't come from Galipot, then?"

"No, madame. I am so unfortunate as not to be acquainted with Galipot."

"Ah! I was mistaken," quietly answered the lady, and she unceremoniously left the viscount to resume her conversation with her friends.

Savinien, vexed and humiliated at being taken for a jobber's clerk, carried his plate and glass farther off from the party.

He approached a group of less bold-mannered women, who were seated in a little parlour beyond, eating ices. These ladies were talking in a low tone, and their conversation appeared to be carried on in the manner customary in good society. They were not, however, seated at table for the pleasure of eating *Plombière* ices or a "granite-cream," for they often turned towards the door, and it was easy to see that they also were waiting for news from the battle-field in the main hall.

One alone was an exception. She did not look at the door, but at Savinien. Her eyes were fixed upon him—large black eyes they were, surrounded by a bluish shade, which must have resulted from other emotions than the commonplace ones of stock-gambling. She was at an age when women *consolidate* their beauty—when they do not become decidedly ugly. It was not her summer, nor was it yet her autumn. She was, at all events, unquestionably handsome.

"She is more than beautiful—she is sympathetic," said Savinien to himself; "but why does she look at me so persistently?" Now, Savinien knew very well that his appearance was not displeasing to women, but he was no coxcomb, and if the idea occurred to him that this lady liked his looks he did not allow himself to dwell upon it.

It must be said that she did not look like one of those insanely coquettish women who must needs be trying to make conquests on all occasions, and who, in bestowing their heart's affections, often trust to chance acquaintance. She was dressed with elegant simplicity, and had the reserved and almost haughty manners of a lady of high breeding. As soon as the eyes of the young viscount met hers, she turned away without affectation, and said a few insignificant words to a young woman with light hair seated near her.

But she had previously long examined Savinien, who, however, felt sure that he had never seen her before. He did as she did, ceased to look, and feigned to concentrate all his attention upon the seed-cake which he was crumbling in his plate. But he did not stop up his ears, and he heard the light-haired woman say: "I was greatly surprised at meeting you here, dear madame, as I know that you never speculate yourself."

"No, it doesn't interest me. My husband operates; that is quite enough," absently replied the lady whom the viscount had remarked more than any other there present.

"It is enough, perhaps," replied her companion, "but it is surely not too much; and you have no cause for complaint, as it is said that he never loses, and will make immense sums this month."

"After all," thought Savinien to himself, "this fine-mannered lady is only the wife of a broker. I took her for one of my own set! This morning I do nothing but make mistakes, and I greatly need George's experience. At Saint-Malo or Rennes I should not have made such an error of judgment. In the first place, every one is known there, and every one demeans himself according to his social standing. Women who keep shops don't imitate the wives of citizens, and the latter don't imitate duchesses. But my Parisian education is decidedly faulty."

"My husband won't run the risk of losing my fortune," added the blonde. "He is far too close to venture a thousand francs in speculation,

ut he regularly finds fault with every article that I have to purchase, nd whenever it is necessary to settle with my dressmaker or milliner we ave frightful scenes. I brought him eight hundred thousand francs as owry, not to mention my expectations: and he hadn't a copper to his ame, but was completely ruined, when I did him the honour of marrying im. Ah! how fortunate you have been, madame, and how many would ke to be in your place!"

"They would find out their mistake," murmured the black-eyed lady: if they knew the life I lead they would be far from envying me."

"What! have you any reason to complain of your husband?" asked he blonde, with the malicious eagerness which women usually display vhen questioning each other as to domestic sorrows.

The other, instead of replying to this delicate question, indicated Savinien by a side glance. Seated where he was, he could not help nearing every word of this singular dialogue.

The blonde understood the gesture and immediately changed her theme. "It seems to me that you have a new pair of horses," said she, looking through the shop window at the superb trotters standing outside.

"Yes," answered the black-eyed lady, indifferently, "my husband made me a birthday present of them But he uses them much oftener than I lo, so that I am not called upon to be especially grateful for the gift."

"My brother," said the blonde, "met him yesterday in the Champs Elysées, all alone in your eight-spring carriage, and he told me that he had never seen finer horses or any more exactly matched And as you are aware, my brother knows all about horses. His race bets have already brought him sixty thousand francs this year. How is it, dear madame, that you have not been seen at Longchamp once this year?"

"I have been out of health for a month past. My husband wants to take me to the Bois de Boulogne after Bourse hours: to-day will be my first appearance this season."

"Then you expect him here?"

"Yes, indeed, and I assure you that I would gladly dispense with the promised pleasure. I should have much preferred not to enter this shop. All these ladies, dabbling in business and eating Frontignan cheese, quite revolt me. Persons belonging to good society ought to be ashamed to show such a frenzied desire to make money."

"But it takes so much to live handsomely! Now-a-days, fifty thousand francs a year are nothing."

"But you, madame, have not taken to this sort of thing, like the little countess yonder who is doing her utmost to induce the fat baroness to buy I don't know what- a bad speculation most likely?"

"Oh no, I don't do anything without consulting a clerk from Galipot's office, who acts for me," answered the blonde, giddily. "He is an excellent young man, and knows all about such matters. He is quite delightful, and has never deceived me."

"I hope he never will," ironically replied the lady with the bluish circles round her eyes.

The other, undoubtedly vexed, did not reply to this answer full of double meaning, and nothing more was said.

Savinien had heard everything, and found the conversation very instructive. The lady waiting for her husband greatly interested him. The more he looked at her the more curious he became about her. Everything in her interested him—her fine eyes, her handsome features with

their expression of weariness, the atmosphere of tender melancholy surrounding her, her full harmonious voice, the sonorous sound of which awoke some confused recollection in his mind. He would have liked to know her, to beg her to confide her sorrows to him, to console and protect her, and without knowing why, he imagined that she would willingly have allowed him to defend her from those who persecuted her.

At this moment Savinien had forgotten his cousin. He was, without knowing it, feeling the ascendancy which women of an uncertain and often of a certain age always have over the young, the inexperienced, those who are new to life. Yvonne de Trémorin was not yet twenty, and this kind of attractiveness was not within her reach. However, Savinien had been careful to conceal the impression made upon him by the unknown lady. Indeed, he made no demonstration whatever, and, excepting a few somewhat prolonged glances, nothing evinced to any of the pastry-shop financiers that he noticed them. He finished his cake and emptied his glass. This was all he could undertake to swallow, and he did not care to give himself an indigestion for the sake of appearing at his ease. He glanced at the clock above the counter and saw that it was half-past two. George had promised to meet him at two-twenty. He was late, and Savinien had now a right to go off. He made ready to do so, and had even paid what he owed to a young person who was much more stylish in appearance than many of the most conspicuous shipowners' daughters of Saint-Malo. But as, after all, he was in no great haste to depart, he began once more to examine the singular picture furnished by all these women grouped in every corner, and holding counsel together as gravely as the deputies who confer in the lobbies of the Chamber upon the most important political questions.

He naturally enough did not forget to glance once more at the beautiful stranger and the young blonde. They had not risen, indeed they were again chatting together, but Savinien now made a discovery which greatly startled him.

Directly behind these ladies, but in the street, there stood a man with his face close against the shop window, and Savinien recognised him immediately as the individual whom he had met at the door of the Bourse, the jealous husband who, in the morning, had besieged his door.

"This fellow is following me, it seems," said Savinien, biting his lips. "I find him at my heels at every step. He saw me from up there when I entered this pastry-cook's shop, and left his gambling to join me. This looks like persecution, and it is time to put a stop to it by asking him what his purpose is."

With this laudable intention Viscount d'Amaulis directed his steps towards the exit, but at the same moment the husband abandoned his post and slowly entered the shop. Savinien, who expected to be accosted by him, made ready to receive him angrily, but the singular individual did not appear to notice him. He passed so near him as almost to brush his sleeve, and went straight towards the two ladies who were conversing in the little parlour.

The blonde shook hands with him in English fashion, while the other lady rose and carelessly accepted his proffered arm. "Good-by, dear madame," said she to the fair-haired woman, "excuse me if I leave you. I see from my husband's face that he is in a dreadful hurry, as usual."

"Her husband!" muttered Savinien, much amazed. "Then it is the veiled lady who left her casket in my hands! I now understand why

his gentleman took up his post on the pavement to watch his wife through he window. He came up stealthily to see whether we appeared to know ach other. He thought, no doubt, that he should catch us having a entimental chat. Yes, that must be it, there isn't the slightest doubt."

The husband, whose conduct Savinien was mentally commenting upon, passed him on the way out as he had already done on entering, and without giving him a single glance.

"It seems to me that he goes off very well pleased," muttered Savinien. 'What a lucky thing that I went no nearer! If he had perceived me approaching his wife he would have entertained no doubt but what it was she who was hidden in my apartment this morning. But he saw, on the contrary, that I took no more notice of the lady than she of me. So now he is convinced that I have no acquaintance whatever with her. How fortunate it is, that I did not remember her voice or figure; for had I done so, I could not have restrained myself from speaking to her, and then we should have been caught! What very steady nerves she must have had not to change countenance on seeing me! She recognised me, however, and that is why she looked at me so persistently. But she neither started nor turned pale. She went on talking with that light-haired, hare-brained woman, and sipping her Roman punch. What coolness! I'm not surprised that she should have deceived her husband. It is easy to see that she is used to dangerous situations. She is decidedly a great lady, 'a very great lady,' as they say in that piece 'La Tour de Nesle,' which made me laugh so heartily when I saw it played at Rennes by a strolling company. There is nothing like a woman belonging to society to be perfectly cool under all circumstances. She is, of course, a *financial* great lady, as her husband is of so much account on 'Change; but the financial ones are as cool as any others on such occasions. Just fancy my not knowing her name! If I dared, I might ask it of that pretty woman with the flaxen hair who was chattering with her just now. She is as talkative as a magpie, and if I set about it dexterously she would tell me."

There is no knowing what Savinien might have done had he been left to his inspiration; but at this moment his soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of George Fougeray, who rushed into the shop and almost into the arms of his friend, the latter having walked to the entrance to watch the strange couple.

Fougeray was radiant, and his first words were:—"Victory along the whole line, my dear fellow! There is my year before me, and the best things imaginable! I will furnish my place in good style, and as for you——"

"I have nothing to do with it," interrupted Savinien, taking George by the arm to oblige him to turn round.

"What the mischief ails you? What is the matter?" cried Fougeray.

"Do you know that gentleman in the vehicle there with that lady?" asked Savinien. "There, getting in now?"

"Vehicle! one would think that you were talking about a cab. That is an 'eight-spring' landau, and there's not another in Paris like it."

"I dare say, but I should like to know who owns it."

"You do know. You have talked of nobody else since you came to Paris."

"What!"

"That marvellous landau belongs to the illustrious Montauron, director of the Provincial Bank, banker-in-ordinary to his Excellency

Baron de Trémorin, and for the time being to Viscount Savinien d'Amaulis."

"And that is Monsieur Montauron getting into it now?"

"Yes. He doesn't lend his carriages to his friends, or his money either."

"Then the lady beside him is his wife?"

"Certainly. Montauron is too proper to drive about with a mistress in broad daylight. Besides he doesn't like 'irregulars.' The majestic person whom he is now taking to the Bois de Boulogne deigned to marry him a dozen years ago, although she came of a family as noble as your own. It is true that they were all poor on her side and Montauron was already wealthy. He is even much wealthier now. He is a daring, far-seeing man, with the luck of the fiend himself. Why, just now, he knew that an official announcement contradicting all the rumours about war would reach the Bourse at two o'clock and he manœuvred accordingly. He fished in troubled waters, and fished to good account. He must have raked in a million at least. He can afford to pay for eight-spring turn-outs, and his wife made a good thing of it when she exchanged the name of her ancestors for the plebeian but well-gilded cognomen of the lucky Montauron."

"What was her name before her marriage?"

"You ask me too much. I once knew, but I have forgotten it. She will tell it you herself when you see her, for I suppose that Montauron will introduce you when you call on him."

"I shan't call," hastily replied Savinien.

"What stuff! Why not? Your uncle urged you to do so."

"Yes—but—I have seen Monsieur Bouret, the under-manager of the bank."

"And that suffices. I can understand that such people are not very entertaining—besides, you can do without them now, unless, indeed, you have fallen in love with Madame Montauron," added George with a laugh.

"What an idea!" cried the viscount.

"She is thirty-two or perhaps thirty five, but she is charming, indeed a very agreeable woman. I will charitably add that she passes for being faithful to her husband, although he hasn't any of the attractions for which she cares. But don't let us remain here talking, for I have interesting news to communicate to you elsewhere than among the lady gamblers in this shop. Come with me to the boulevard. After that you can go to see the dowagers who are waiting for you in the Faubourg Saint-Germain."

Savinien suffered himself to be led away. He was completely upset by the strange discovery which he had just made, and since he had learned that the lady with the casket was the wife of M. Montauron he could think of nothing else. The consequences of his adventure appeared to him all at once. He could already see the husband watching his movements, and the wife coming some fine day to claim of him the casket which, by a most unlucky impulse, he had deposited in the vaults of the establishment directed by M. Montauron himself, banker for uncle Trémorin, and perhaps something more.

And, as an additional mischance, he was debarred from consulting George Fougeray on this delicate matter. When Savinien had set out in the morning he had resolved to tell his friend everything, but then he did not know the name of the lady concerned, and no one would have been compromised.

Now the case was not the same. To tell Fougeray, one of the best known men about town, that Madame Montauron had very nearly been caught by her husband while paying a clandestine visit to a foreigner at a hotel, this would surely be unworthy of a gentleman.

Savinien already reproached himself with having said too much in the presence of George, who was remarkably quick-witted, and guessed almost everything at once.

However, George was not at this moment thinking of the Montaurons. He was full of his success, and in the highest spirits, and as soon as he left the shop, he began telling the story of his lofty deeds. "My dear boy," he commenced "prepare to hear the most astounding things, and, though you are a cool-headed native of Brittany, don't swoon with joy. Do you know how much we have made?"

"We? I told you that I wouldn't speculate."

"I know it, my dear Savinien, and I have speculated for you, and even without your permission, so you have nothing to reproach yourself with."

"What does all this mean?"

"I am in earnest. I never joke about money matters. Since this morning we have sold three hundred thousand francs' worth of Rente three per cent., at the rate of eighty two thirty-five, and bought it back at eighty-two."

"If you imagine that I understand one word of all this jargon, you are mistaken."

"There is no necessity for understanding. Your rural intelligence, however, must see the difference. Our profit is thirty-five. But that isn't all. We then bought at the same rate a nice lot of stock which——"

"I don't know what the 'difference' means, and I don't wish to know, but I do know that if I had lost any large sum, I couldn't have paid it. So I have no right to share in the benefits of your operation. It wouldn't be honest, as I risked nothing, though you, who are rich, might have borne loss."

"Without you, my dear friend, I couldn't have operated on three hundred thousand. I used your name and your credit."

"My credit? You are crazy! It is only six thousand francs."

"Savinien, you distress me!" said George seriously, letting fall his companion's arm. "But I see Galipot coming towards us, and I imagine that you don't care to meet that gentleman, and have another interview."

"Oh, no!" cried Viscount d'Amaulis.

"Well, then, let us separate. I will see you this evening, and explain what you now refuse to hear. Till we meet again, you incipient millionaire!"

"He is certainly mad," muttered Savinien, seeing his friend run towards M. Galipot, "and I should become a lunatic if I stayed all day with him. I will go to see my old cousins, they will serve as a shower-bath to calm me."

III.

"Days follow and are not alike" is an old saying which might be applied to nights, especially to those spent by a young man who has just left his province and plunged for the first time into the whirlpool of Parisian life.

After a stormy afternoon Viscount d'Amaulis had a quiet evening. Leaving George Fougeray at the Bourse he walked towards the Faubourg

Saint-Germain, and had hardly crossed the Pont des Saints Pères ere he became calm.

The breeze on the left bank of the Seine had a quieting effect on his mind; it but faintly echoed the turmoil of the boulevards, and Savinien found that, as soon as he reached the opposite side of the water, he was no longer the same.

He thought of the peaceful manor of Plouër and those who lived there; the sweet face of his dear cousin appeared to him, but not as in that dream, weeping at the foot of Mount Sinai. No, she now smiled upon him, and shook her finger at him to reproach him for failing to write to her. He vowed that he would go home early, and, by a long letter, redeem his promise.

The two relatives whom he was going to see were but distant connections. One was related to the Trémorins and the other to the Amaulis: however, both welcomed him with open arms, although he had barely presented himself at their residences during his former visits to Paris.

The Viscountess de Loudinières, who was a Trémorin, now told him that she wished to marry him to one of five or six heiresses among her list of acquaintances who were looking for young husbands of old family. In vain did Savinien declare that he had not come to Paris to marry; he was obliged to consent to be introduced to the noble relatives of these young ladies.

He then called on the Marchioness de Laffemas, whose great-great-grandmother had been an Amaulis. She at once sent for her son, who was at the moment examining a horse, and this sporting character, who looked like an English groom, deigned to invite Savinien to take a seat on his mail at the coming Longchamp races.

The two visits, to tell the truth, were not very enlivening to our gentleman from Brittany, but they quieted him down to the point that he forgot what a different kind of Paris was to be found at a few paces from the Rue de Varennes. In these aristocratic quarters the existence of a "Ladies' Exchange" was not suspected, and George Fougeray would have cut no figure there, although he was not easily abashed.

Savinien found the young speculator's society much more entertaining than that of the dowagers, or the presumptive heir of the Marchioness de Laffemas, but he did not care to see him again that day. He feared George might wish to make him join some gay party, and he was tired of enjoying himself, and wished to rest from past excitement and fatigue. He especially wished to avoid any financial explanation with the over-enterprising friend who had used his name to speculate in the public funds, and he hoped that, after that night's reflections, George would not insist upon sharing the profits of his risky operations with him.

The prudent viscount, therefore, decided not to return immediately to the livelier part of the city, where Fougeray, the gayest of men, resided. He went for a stroll in the Luxembourg Garden, where the chestnut trees were in early bloom; he sauntered along the new boulevard, which has transformed the old "Pays Latin," and, after crossing the Jardin des Plantes, he took the penny boat down the Seine. This was just the way that country people and English tourists spend a day in Paris. The only thing wanting was to visit the tomb of Napoleon under the dome of the Invalides.

However, this journey to peaceful places altogether quieted Savinien's mind. Seeing trees and flowers, he began to love nature once more, and to

gret the woods and heaths of Brittany. He began to ask himself whether ought not to return at once to Plouer without entering any further into risian life. It would be the shortest way out of the stock-gambling atter. Uncle Trémorin would no doubt find fault with him for escaping m the exacted test, but Yvonne would quiet her father, and his own expected return would make her so happy!

Paris, like a certain subterranean locality, is paved with good intenns, and on that evening Savinien's intentions were excellent. He dined tuously at a respectable restaurant in the Rue de l'Université, where s uncle had taken him on former occasions during their last visit; he nt to smoke a cigar or two under the colonnade of the Palais Royal, ere he was sure of not meeting George, and this was all.

At ten o'clock he was in bed, and a few moments later asleep, still ving, however, on his conscience that unwritten letter to Plouer.

He did not wake up till the clock had run its round, and the first thing saw when he opened his eyes were some letters which a servant had aced on the pedestal while he was asleep. There were three of them, d on the envelope of the first that he took up he recognised the writing Baron de Trémorin—large and firm, with down strokes like the masts a ship.

"The deuce!" muttered Savinien, "my uncle has not waited for me write. I am afraid that he will sarcastically congratulate me on my eat haste in doing so. I have not yet penned a line during the forty-ght hours I have been here. It is shameful, and I deserve to be found ult with."

However, it was necessary to open the threatening letter, and having ne so he read as follows:—

"Nephew, you are not exact, and this is a very bad fault. The postan came this morning with empty hands, and your cousin, who had gone watch for him on the road, was so vexed that on her way back to the ateau she lost my newspapers in the avenue. I was obliged to breakst without the *Gazette de France*, and without this appetiser to which I n so accustomed, I found myself unable to eat. For this reason I send ou my malediction, and that of my daughter, who has lost three pounds weight since you left. This preamble means, my dear boy, that we are xious about you. Your aunt maintains that you must be ill. Yvonne ys nothing, but she is not pleased. I think that you ought to have ritten at once to let us know about your arrival; but I will excuse you, I look for a long letter to-morrow."

"To-morrow! that is to-day!" muttered Savinien, sadly. "Heaven nows what they will think when they get no letter! My uncle is capable coming here without a word of warning. Well, I shouldn't be sorry; nd if he takes me back to Plouër I shall be glad. But let me see what se he says," resumed Savinien, taking up the letter again.

"I can well understand that you must be very weary after a night pent in a railway train, and I should not have written had I not forgotten ne matter which is of special importance among those which I spoke to ou of. Montauron, the banker to whom I recommended you, is married, nd when you go to see him, if you have not already called on him by the me this letter reaches you, do not fail to be introduced to his wife. She of a very good family—much better than his own, which is of low birth. he has an excellent footing in Parisian society, and as she is no longer oung, she can, without impropriety, be your guide in the circle she moves

in, which is such as I wish you to enter. Now that I have told you all this, and sufficiently lectured you, I need only embrace you, my dear boy, for myself and the two others, who talk of nothing but you from morning till night." This letter was signed—"Your affectionate uncle, Guy de Trémorin," and below the signature there ran a postscript: "Don't go beyond your letter of credit, but don't live closely. I did not send you to Paris to economise. You will have plenty of time to do that when you have settled down at Plouër."

Yvonne had written nothing, but Savinien found a little yellow flower in the letter which seemed as though it must have been culled by her from a tuft of wild furze which grew beneath her window at the foot of the old manor wall. Her cousin was touched by this souvenir, but he would have been more pleased had it not been for the strange and unexpected instructions of his uncle as regarded Madame Montauron. Baron de Trémorin spoke of this woman as if he knew her well; but such could hardly be the case, for had he been aware how she was conducting herself he would have been far from recommending his nephew to place himself under her care.

"Where the mischief can they have met?" Savinien asked himself. "I remember very well that yesterday she said she heard my name for the first time, and I flung it in her husband's face while she was hiding in my room. And now my uncle wishes that I should be introduced into society by her. He makes a pretty choice, indeed! Monsieur Montauron would have to consent to it, in the first place, and I don't suppose he is disposed to open his doors to me now."

As the viscount uttered these words he carelessly took up one of the other letters lying on the pedestal. "Ah, this surpasses everything else!" he cried, as he glanced at it. "The husband invites me to spend the evening with him! What can it mean?" And Savinien read aloud an invitation couched in the following terms:—"Monsieur Charles Montauron begs Viscount d'Amaulis to do him the honour of spending the evening with him on Friday, May 6th, and is at home on every Friday as a rule."

"My name in full," said Savinien. "Yes, this letter is really addressed to me. But come, how is it possible? Is it a trap laid for me, or were Monsieur Montauron's suspicions removed by our meeting at the pie-shop? A trap! no! that's absurd! A man in this banker's position doesn't invite people to his house to ensnare them. I am more disposed to believe that he wishes to see me in presence of his wife so as to observe our manner towards one another. And, on the other hand, it is he, and not his wife, who invites me. It seems as though it were a gentlemen's reception. 'Friday and the following Fridays.' He has his 'days' like a prime minister. However, whether his wife appears or not at these entertainments the question is—shall I go?"

Savinien now plunged into a sea of conjecture. He asked himself whether Madame Montauron would be better pleased if he rejected her husband's invitation. Since he had seen her face he had become interested in her, and he was of all things desirous of avoiding anything that might do her harm. He did not believe that she was immaculate, but did not wish to be the first to blame her. Her eyes seemed to ask pardon for her transgressions, and Viscount d'Amaulis was too young not to be moved by two such lovely imploring eyes.

And besides, he no longer saw the scene in which he had, in spite of himself, played the part of protector in the same light. Appearances were undoubtedly against Madame Montauron. A woman who has nothing

reproach herself with does not leave her home without her husband's owledge to call upon a gentleman at a hotel. The fear she had shown being seen proved that she was in fault. But, after all, nothing owed that the gentleman in question was her lover. The contrary, en, seemed more probable, as, instead of awaiting her visit, he had nished early in the morning.

What could have occurred between them before this unfortunate visit? at tie bound Madame Montauron to a Swedish count, who only visited ris as a passer-by? It was impossible to guess. There was evidently ne secret which this foreigner of title possessed, some secret which placed banker's wife in his power, and it doubtless related to her past life. e had perhaps come to entreat Count Aparanda to restore her some mpromising letters. Whatever it might be, however, she had certainly ceeded in quieting her husband's anger, in persuading him to believe in r innocence, since they had gone to drive together in the Champs ysées and the Bois de Boulogne.

And, such being the position of affairs, would it not be better for vinien to appear at the reception? To refuse would, in a manner, be uivalent to confessing some sort of complicity with the lately suspected fe. And, on the other hand, there must at some time or other be an planation between Savinien and M. Montauron, for the jealous husband ew whom he had spoken to since Viscount d'Amaulis had given his me, and the nephew of Baron de Trémorin could not be thought a anger. If the financier had not appeared to recognise the young native Brittany when he met him on 'Change, it was, no doubt, because the ace was unsuitable for a quiet explanation, and the shop where they after-ards met was equally objectionable. However, this explanation must be pected, and indeed it was rather Savinien's place to furnish it than M. ontauron's duty to ask for it. He was the younger man, and M. ontauron had reason to think himself the offended party.

"Yes," thought Yvonne's cousin, after a long pause, "I see what this vitation means. It is as though the banker said to me: 'I acted rongly; my wife was not in your apartments, and I regret having given ay to uncalled-for violence. I cannot, for reasons which you can guess, to apologise to you at the hotel where this painful scene occurred; t I wish to show you that I harbour no resentment against you, and u will profit, I trust, by the opportunity which I offer you of putting end to a false situation.' Yes, that is it. Monsieur Montauron haves like a gentleman, and as he takes the first step, I am called upon respond to his advances by some personal initiative; merely to accept s invitation is not enough. I intended to visit him before I knew there as any difficulty between himself and his wife; and now that I know it, there is all the more reason why I should pay this visit at once. I ve an excellent motive for doing so this very day. My uncle expressly joined upon me to call upon M. Montauron on my arrival, and in the tter I have just received, he renews his request. I feel certain that I all be received, for Monsieur Montauron must be more desirous even an I am for an interview at which we can freely talk about what took ace yesterday morning. Why should I shrink from this interview? y line of conduct is clearly marked out, I must retain an expectant titude, as it will not do for me to propound this difficult question. He ill undoubtedly do so on his side, and then I will not pretend to be norant of subsequent matters. I will not conceal from him that after

our meeting at the pastry-cook's shop, where he went to meet his wife, I learned his name, and that I thought it best to see him in order to apologise for having received him rudely when I did not know who he was. I will, of course, add that I have not the honour of knowing Madame Montauron, and I shall only tell half a fib, as she has never spoken to me with her face uncovered. I shall even beg the favour of being introduced to her afterwards. But if I intend to do all this to-day, I have not a moment to lose," added the viscount, springing out of his bed.

In his hurry he forgot to open the third letter lying on the pedestal, and it was only when he had finished dressing that, in putting the two others into his pocket-book, he caught sight of this unopened missive. The address was in a writing unknown to him, and the envelope bore the Paris postmark.

"This is strange!" said Savinien to himself. "I only arrived here a couple of days ago, and people already experience the wish to open a correspondence with me. It appears that I have made new friends without knowing it."

When he looked at the letter, however, he changed his mind. It came from the office of a broker, and contained merely a printed formula, filled up by some clerk, and informing Viscount d'Amaulis that his orders had been executed on 'Change the day before. It very curtly indicated the rates at which three per cent. Rente had been sold, bought, and re-sold in his name. This notification made Savinien frown, for he had persuaded himself that he had remained outside of his friend Fougeray's operations. There could no longer be any doubt, however: George had used the name of Amaulis and his own did not even appear on the notification.

"The deuce take him!" exclaimed the viscount: "I shall now be obliged to mix up in this share dabbling which I don't understand. I shall perhaps even have to see this broker, and who knows what I may have to do at his office? George declared yesterday that he had made money, that *we* had, so he stated it; but may I be hanged if I understand the meaning of all these figures—they may mean ruin or good fortune—it is all gibberish to me, and I will make that good-for-nothing George rid me this very day of the business, and attend to the settlement himself, if there is a settlement; for myself I shall never get used to the words they use on 'Change, nor the things they do there."

A trifle cooled by this outburst, Savinien thrust the letter into his pocket. He would not place it in his memorandum book in contact with the note in which his cousin Yvonne had slipped a flower.

After glancing at himself in the mirror, he went out, intending to call on the great financier, who for twenty-four hours had occupied so large a share of his thoughts, and have an interview with him. M. Bouret had told him that Montauron was always to be found at his residence in the Avenue Ruysdael before the hour of noon. This was the proper time, then. After leaving word with the doorkeeper of the hotel as to when he should return, in case George Fougeray called to ask for him, Savinien hailed a victoria and drove to the Parc Monceau. He did not wish to alight from a public vehicle at the door of a man whose turn-outs were so splendid, and he was glad of an opportunity to examine his residence before entering it.

It was a perfect palace, or at least a royal château, with a courtyard in front and garden in the rear. What a courtyard and what a garden! A gilded railing, a marble pavement, and a superb entrance-gate; behind

e gorgeous edifice an immense park, full of old trees and with broad ns. Savinien thought of the old manor of Plouer, with its gaping acks in the stone work, and the kitchen garden behind it. But the mparison did not abash him: he was beginning to be used to the display ade by financiers, and so he boldly rang the bell.

Savinien said to himself that, as Viscount d'Amaulis, he had a perfect ght to enter the house of a prince of finance, and he was firmly resolved see M. Montauron and settle matters with him. Now he no longer sitated. He wished to be seen openly entering the house like a man ho does not shrink from what he is about. He was, perhaps, remarked. r a face appeared for an instant between the curtains of one of the win- ows on the first floor, a face which vanished at once. Savinien guessed at it was that of the banker's wife, but he could not make sure on the oint as the curtain was not stirred again. No one replied to the ringing: he courtyard remained deserted, and the entrance closed.

"Where are the liveried footmen whom I saw at the bank yesterday?" uttered the viscount: "one would think that this was the palace of the leeping Beauty."

At this moment a sharp noise made him turn his head, and he saw at a side door had opened, a small door in a wall near a kind of lodge hich seemed to be that of the doorkeeper. He went towards it, think g that the main entrance was probably only used for carriages, and he as received by a footman, in a dark livery, a sort of giant, resembling ose men who in old times came from Switzerland to serve as door eepers in lordly mansions. This imposing personage, moreover, had the anners of olden times, and he was extremely polite. He raised his gold ced cap, and made haste to take the card held out to him by Savinien.

"If you will step into the reception room, Monsieur le Vicomte," aid he, "I will go and announce you to the baron."

The "baron" was apparently the director of the Provincial Bank.

"The deuce!" thought Yvonne's cousin, "I was not aware that Monsieur Montauron had a title. Neither Monsieur Bouret nor George old me that, and there is no sign of it on his note of invitation. Perhaps, fter all, he is only a baron to his own people. All financiers have some- hing or other strung on to their names."

A bell touched by the doorkeeper abruptly curtailed these countrified eflections, and a footman appeared at the entrance of a vestibule on the ight hand side. This footman took the viscount's card from the door- keeper's hand, and introduced Savinien into a conservatory, which did luty as an anteroom, and which was full of flowers and tropical plants. t was like a forest in some new world, but a civilised forest, as there were omfortable seats at regular intervals. Through an immense sheet of glass ne would see the garden of the house blending with the Parc Monceau, rom which it was only separated by a low railing covered with foliage.

"This is wonderfully beautiful," muttered Savinien, as the servant went off to find his master. "This is what I call intelligent luxury. My uncle wouldn't give his weather-beaten manor for this glaringly new abode, but I think that my dear Yvonne would be happy in such a place. She likes verdure, and here there is plenty of it."

After a moment's waiting the footman reappeared, more respectful than ever. "The baron is in the garden," said he, "and requests Monsieur le Vicomte to have the kindness to join him there."

Savinien, somewhat surprised, followed the footman, who led him across

a large hall, also full of flowers, to a door which opened directly upon a sanded walk.

"Fancy my expecting a solemn interview in a gloomy private apartment!" thought the viscount. "This banker has his own way of doing things. But, indeed, this is charming, this reception in a park, as it were! I shall be more at ease under the shade of the trees when we come to our delicate explanation."

He was about to ask the man in livery in which direction to look for the owner of the domain, when he suddenly saw him emerge from among the trees. It was really the gentleman whom he had seen three times the day before, and on the first occasion under circumstances not to be forgotten.

His look and manner, however, were no longer the same, and he wore a morning coat, fancy trousers, and a straw hat. His regular features bore an expression of cheerful calmness. He was no longer the grave financier surrounded by the gamblers of the Bourse, still less the angry husband who had burst open the door of No. 19. This transformation seemed favourable to Savinien, who immediately assumed a pleasant look. He had but to cross the walk to meet M. Montauron; he took off his hat, bowing, but not too low, because of the very peculiar position in which he found himself with regard to this banker, a man much older than himself. His aunt Trémorin, a lady of the old school, had taught him the art of bowing.

M. Montauron was less ceremonious. Making a sign to Savinien to resume his hat, he said, politely: "I was expecting you, sir, and am delighted to see you."

"Good!" thought Savinien, "he doesn't call me 'viscount' at every moment, like Monsieur Bouret did yesterday, and is glad to see me. This is well; but why did he expect me to-day?"

"You will excuse me, I hope, for receiving you in the open air," said Montauron. "I am in the habit of strolling here in the morning, and as you live in the country, I presume that you do not object to that."

"Oh, not at all," exclaimed the young native of Brittany; "but it is I who ought to apologise. I arrived in Paris on the day before yesterday, and I ought to have called on you immediately, as I had a letter to hand you from my uncle——"

"I know its contents, and I am also aware that Monsieur de Trémorin is well. He wrote to me a couple of days ago to tell me of your intended trip to Paris. I can understand why you did not call here yesterday."

This remark, which seemed to bear upon the events of the day before, confused Savinien, but M. Montauron immediately resumed: "I understand it all the better, as you called at our banking house, where you thought you would find me."

"Ah, Monsieur Bouret told you then——"

"He only told me that he had seen you and sent you the trifling sum which you desired. I met him on 'Change in the afternoon but I only had time for a few words."

"Fortunately, he knows nothing about the casket as yet," thought Savinien.

"However you are here," resumed the banker, "and since you do not object to walking, we will, if you like, take a turn round the garden. No one will disturb us, and you will no doubt agree with me that we need to have a talk together."

Savinien started. It was clear that the time had come for explana-

and he was not sure of being able to emerge triumphantly from his position.

Montauron conducted him along a winding pathway under a vault age, formed by far-spreading trees rising to the height of fifty feet the ground. The spot would not have been ill-chosen for a duel ut seconds, for it was completely hidden from all prying eyes.

e banker and the viscount walked on, side by side, slowly and in e. Savinien did not care to be the first to refer to the subject he foresaw would be discussed, and M. Montauron was undoubtedly to find words to begin. "Monsieur d'Amaulis," he said at last, spect and esteem your uncle too highly, and I am too much inclined e you yourself, to resort to circumlocution in referring to the posi- n which I find myself as regards you. I know that I am speaking entleman, and I feel no hesitation in saying that in what occurred rday morning the fault was entirely my own."

assure you, sir," replied Savinien, who felt pleased by these words, t I have already forgotten what happened."

remember it, however," replied the banker, "and I owe it to lf to explain my conduct to you: I also owe it to my wife, who will ntly receive you, and I must, moreover, justify her, for I have acted way that might lead you to think her a guilty woman."

thought that you had made a mistake, that is all," said Savinien ly. "I could not think otherwise, there being no one with me, you wished to enter my room by force."

I was wrong, indeed. I have ascertained that I was deceived by a blance. I was walking along the Rue du Helder, when I saw from ance a lady who looked to me like Madame Montauron entering a . How could such an absurd idea have entered my mind? I cannot in it! I became, as it were, crazed, and this is the less compre- ble, from the fact that Madame Montauron, during twelve years of ied life, has never given me the shadow of a cause for jealousy."

vinien drew a long breath. He began to think this husband a ct George Dandin,* and that he would end by embracing him.

I don't know, sir," continued M. Montauron, "whether you made inquiries about what took place after the highly regretable scene h I had with you."

No, sir, no!" replied Savinien, with embarrassment. "I thought it ith me to talk with the people of the hotel about an adventure h concerned me so little, for at the time I did not have the honour of ving you."

True, you did not know who I was, unfortunately, for had you known ame the situation would have been very different. You would, I ure, have invited me into your room, but, taking me for a perfect ger, you could not yield to my threats. I should have made all e to apologise, and there would have been an end of the matter. n you mentioned your name I was on the point of doing the same, u had been mentioned to me by Monsieur de Trémorin, and I knew I had a gentleman to deal with. But before a hotel-keeper and his nts I could not do so."

It would have compromised you," interrupted Savinien, who was too glad to find things as they were.

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*The classical French type of a deluded husband.—*Trans.*

"It seemed so to me, and I remained silent," resumed the banker; "but it is fortunate that you made yourself known, for I immediately saw that I was wrong. You had just arrived in Paris, and had never seen Madame Montauron before. What acquaintance could you have with her? I was ashamed of my own conduct, and so I went away. To return to more rational thoughts, it was only necessary for me to be in a condition to reason. I said to myself that I had acted with unpardonable thoughtlessness, and that instead of running after a woman who vaguely resembled my wife, instead of watching her and waiting in the street for her to emerge from the house which she had entered, I should do better to return home. I had left Madame Montauron there, I found her there, and thus had the proof that my suspicions were senseless. I then asked myself how I could have entertained them, and I insist upon giving you this explanation of my temporary madness, in order that you may not take me for a rash fool.

"There are times in life," continued the banker, "when a man's head is full of fancies—you see that I mention all the 'extenuating circumstances' in my favour—and yesterday mine was in that state when I remarked this woman walking in front of me. Her figure and walk seemed familiar to me. I looked more attentively at her; she vanished at the entrance of a hotel. Why did I stop before that door, and why did I make up my mind to enter and cross the courtyard? I should find it difficult to answer a question that I have put to myself ten times already since this ridiculous affair. But something further occurred which made me lose my head. I was alone in the courtyard, and about to go off, when the woman whom I had already seen suddenly appeared at the foot of the staircase where I was standing."

"Does he think that he is telling me something I don't know already?" thought the viscount, who had quite recovered his coolness.

"This time," continued M. Montauron, "she appeared to me front ways, but with her face hidden by a thick veil. Some details of her dress caught my eye. As though all fashionable women did not dress very much alike! Besides, she carried what appeared to be a box in her hand."

"Oh! now he is coming nearer to the point!" said Savinien. "Perhaps he has heard of my visit to the vaults of the Provincial Bank."

"This circumstance ought to have satisfied me, as Madame Montauron is not in the habit of carrying parcels with her when she goes out walking. But, as I told you, I had lost my head. And besides, this woman, as though she wished to give cause for my absurd suspicions, turned round as soon as she saw me, and began to run up the staircase at full speed. I ran after her—I did not know what I was doing—and I could not see very clearly, but she seemed to me to turn into the passage with which your rooms communicated. You know the rest."

"I fully understand, now, why you knocked at my door," said the viscount, as if quite satisfied. "This hasty flight must have seemed very strange to you. But there were several doors in the passage."

"I might have knocked at any door, and if the poor creature whom I frightened so much fled to any of your neighbours' rooms she must have laughed at the ridiculous spectacle which I afforded her."

"If that neighbour had had any courage he would have made the affair his own," said Savinien, who, so relieved was his mind, was now laughing inwardly at the poor man who was confiding in him.

"I am glad that you were the person whom I had to deal with,"

rly added Montauron, "for I am sure that you will keep all this a
t. Fortunately, the hotel-keeper does not know me. Indeed no one,
see, knew who I was, and as travellers are birds of passage, the one
whom that woman called will go away one of these days, and she
not return there any more. So that——"

I think that he has gone already," said Savinien, heedlessly.

Ah, you asked about him, then?" said M. Montauron, looking at the
unt, who made haste to repair his blunder.

Yes, yes," replied d'Amaulis, forgetting that he had previously
ared that he had made no inquiries, "I had the curiosity to ask the
l-keeper, and he told me that the lady had called several times already
e a foreigner who lived on the fourth floor—a Spaniard, I believe.
rever, he had changed his room on the day before yesterday, and had
n one on my floor, at the end of the passage. His lady friend did not
w that he had made the change, and went up to the fourth floor,
rked, and as he did not open, went down again, intending to ask the
-keeper about him——"

And instead of going to him she fled at sight of me. Why?"

The hotel-keeper thinks that you must resemble her husband, and
in her confusion she took you for him."

It may be so. I took her for my wife."

Then she came up and met a maid in the passage who recognised her,
bite her veil, and told her where the gentleman was to be found. He
t have been waiting for her, for his key was in the door. She went in,
no doubt barricaded herself inside."

And I, meantime, besieged your door. Jealousy is really the most
ish of passions. I played an absurd part, and it might have been still
se. Imagine what might have happened if I had met with a rough
of man! We should have come to blows—a duel would have
owed. I shouldn't have cared about that; but in my position as a
k director, and chairman of various companies, I am called upon to
d such things, and my standing would have been greatly affected by a
idal. Your uncle would have withdrawn his confidence from me,"
ed M. Montauron with a smile.

I am sure that he wouldn't. My uncle served in the navy, you
w, and he is much given to excusing duelling."

No matter; it is better that things should not have gone so far,
cially as I was utterly in the wrong. You say that this foreigner has
?"

Yes, sir, last evening. The lady remained with him all day. They
ved till night time, and towards eight o'clock he went out for a cab,
his luggage put into it, and got inside with his fair one; at least, so
the hotel-keeper."

Viscount d'Amaulis had plunged into the most outrageous misstate-
nts, but with the best of intentions, and he had no reason to apprehend
t his mendacity would be detected, as it was evident that M. Mon-
ron would not expose himself to recognition by going to question the
el-keeper or his servants.

While Savinien was furnishing all these particulars the credulous hus-
nd became more and more cheerful. At the outset his face had been
newhat gloomy, but the clouds now disappeared; his look expressed
mingled satisfaction, and the viscount thought that it showed gratitude
regarded himself. "The poor man believed in his wife's innocence."

said Savinien to himself, "but he still had a doubt. He has none now, and I have brought this about."

Savinien was right, for at the first turn in the shady walk M. Montauron suddenly stopped, seized hold of both of his hands, and said to him in the most cordial tones: "I know that I can rely upon your discretion, and am greatly obliged to you, for I am indebted to you for not having got into difficulties which might have seriously injured me. Believe that I am, and shall always be, entirely at your service. Monsieur de Trémorin honours me with his friendship; I ask for yours, and offer you mine."

"I accept with all my heart," cried Viscount d'Amaulis, who mentally reproached himself for stimulating the conjugal illusions of the worthy man, and wished to be agreeable to him.

"Let us speak of yourself now, my dear sir," resumed the banker. "Your uncle wrote to me that you would spend six months in Paris. I need not tell you that my house is open to you, but I should be glad if your stay here had further results than that of merely meeting entertaining people. May I tell you that as soon as I heard of your expected arrival I laid a plan which will perhaps surprise you, but which I am about to submit to you. I thought that I—but you will, no doubt, think that I am meddling with what does not concern me—I thought that I might find a wife for you."

"A wife!" exclaimed Savinien; "I assure you that I don't want one, sir."

"Of course not!" replied M. Montauron, laughing; "at your age no one does, and it was not to settle down that you came to Paris. I understand that, and am not surprised that you wish to enjoy your liberty during your stay in a city where there is so wide a field for enjoyment, nor do I wish to thrust my advice upon you, or ask you to share my views; but I may ask you whether you would object to being introduced to a charming young girl who would, I hope, please you, and whom I am sure that you would please."

"Certainly not, but——"

"I will add that she is an orphan, and will bring a superb dowry to her husband—five millions at least."

"There is not another word to be said. I don't possess the fifth of a million, so the disproportion would be too great."

"Allow me to say that you don't yet know Parisian society. It is divided into two distinct sets—the one with money, the other with birth, and they tend to amalgamation. You are, no doubt, aware of it, as it is nothing new."

"I, certainly, am aware that such was already the custom in olden times, and still more often so now-a-days; but I have not the slightest inclination for the arrangements that are usually made. It is not that I lack progressive views, if such be the term to use in this case, but simply because I do not wish to marry a woman richer than myself."

"You are right in principle, my dear sir; but everything depends upon circumstances. To give the title of viscountess to a young lady whom one scarcely knows and does not love, in exchange for her wealth, would be a mere bargain, and I understand that such a transaction would be repugnant to your feelings of delicacy. However, if you feel deeply in love with a rich heiress, and she with you, her wealth would not stand in the way; your marriage would be a love-match. In such a case the

ıe would be a mere accessory ; and, let me add, the daughters of of our men of money are well worthy of being courted for their own and can dispense with the charms of their wealth."

Certainly," muttered Savinien, who began to be embarrassed by the er's persistence. He did not wish to abruptly declare that his heart not his own, and that Yvonne de Trémorin was his affianced bride.

However," resumed M. Montauron, laughing, "I must be tiring you my theories as to the system of compensation, and if I continued ng to you as to the intermarrying of different classes, I should go beyond my purpose. You will soon see the young lady whom I ded for you : for you will, I trust, do me the favour of spending next ıy evening with us. You will see her, I repeat, and you are quite at ty to take no notice of her if she does not please you. Let us now k, if you are willing, about your uncle. He writes to me that he shall ably make up his mind to spend a few days in Paris during the ner. This is good news. We are really friends, and I am much oted to him, for he had a great deal to do with my marriage, which place some years ago."

avinien had some difficulty in repressing a smile ; he thought to himthat his uncle had done the banker but a sorry service in marrying to a woman who, after twelve years' married life was now running a Swedish count. However, he replied, with perfect seriousness : "I aware that he had the honour of knowing Madame Montauron. I ived a letter from him this morning, in which he expressly urges upon o request the favour of an introduction to her."

She will be only too happy to receive you, and that as soon as possible. d her that you would call."

Ah !" exclaimed Savinien, with surprise.

Need I say that she is entirely ignorant of all that occurred between esterday morning. I have not said a word to her about the matter, could I do so. She had not left her apartments—I am sure of that— I was very careful to say nothing of my absurd mistake. She little ks that I ran after a woman who happened to look like her ; and this ery fortunate, for she would have been deeply wounded had she learnt , I suspected her. We breakfasted together this morning, as usual, I then told her that I expected you. It was the first time that I had mentioned your name, and she was scarcely aware that Monsieur de norin had a nephew. She asked me several questions respecting you, this was only natural, as you are the nephew of an old friend of her ily ; but I could only tell her very little, as I was supposed not to e even seen you. She expressed a desire to invite you here, and to do in her power to make your stay in Paris a pleasant one. Between selves it is she who wants to marry you to the orphan with five ions."

'I am greatly obliged to her," stammered Savinien, "but——"

'Oh, don't be alarmed, I repeat it ; it is only a passing fancy, and you quite at liberty to take no notice of Madame Montauron's intentions. you must see that she wishes to serve you. If I had entertained the dow of a suspicion, her words would have sufficed to remove it."

'This woman is very artful, and the man very simple," thought count d'Amaulis.

'You see, besides," resumed the banker, "that we both find ourselves curious position as regards my wife. We met yesterday in the way

you know of, and she supposes that we meet to-day for the first time. It is, however, our second occasion of finding ourselves together."

"I beg your pardon—it is the third, and Madame Montauron has already seen me."

"Pray explain. I don't understand you," said the banker, hastily.

"Didn't you come into a pastry-cook's shop near the Bourse at half-past two yesterday afternoon?"

"True! I had quite forgotten that, and I assure you I was greatly embarrassed when I did so. I already knew that my wife was not in fault, and I longed to apologise to you; but in her presence it was impossible. I was obliged to appear as if I did not know you, for how could I have approached you without entering into explanations which it was necessary to avoid?"

"I understand that, sir, but I confess that I was very much surprised when I met you face to face in the shop. I almost expected another sort of scene, as I recognised you at once."

"I saw that you did," said Montauron, with a smile: "I even saw that you prepared to defend yourself; but I had not the least desire to attack you, and I wished to take my wife away with me."

"And so," said Savinien, perfidiously, "it was Madame Montauron who went away in the carriage with you?"

"Yes. I had asked her to wait for me in the shop, as I was obliged to go for a moment on 'Change, and I did not know that chance would bring you there as well."

"Nor did I expect to see you. Chance does things strangely. You might have thought——"

"That you had gone there to have an interview with Madame Montauron? No; that absurd idea did not occur to me. My fit of jealousy was over."

"Not quite, my good fellow," thought Savinien to himself. "You looked through the windows of the shop, and you were much relieved when you saw that I was not paying any heed to your wife's presence."

"Now, that I think of it," resumed the banker, "you recognised the face of the gentleman who picked so foolish a quarrel with you; but you did not know who I was, for, during the stormy words on the threshold of your apartment, I did not tell you my name."

"Oh! true enough I didn't know it then, although I had questioned a person on the steps of the Bourse. I had caught sight of you near the colonnade."

"Where I was talking with several people. You did not ask the right person, for I am very well known; but some one else must have told you, for just now, when you were kind enough to join me in the garden here, you did not appear surprised to find that your enemy of the morning and your uncle's banker were one and the same man."

"I was told your name yesterday. When you were getting into your carriage, one of my friends came up, and, knowing you very well, he told me your name."

"I hope that you said nothing about that unfortunate scene."

"Oh! how can you suppose that for a moment, especially as my friend told me who you were?"

"Excuse me. I spoke thoughtlessly. Of course the Viscount d'Amaulis would not have ridiculed his uncle's banker. May I ask the name of the gentleman you questioned?"

I have no reason for hiding it," replied Savinien: "it was one of my hums at the law-school at Rennes. His name is George Fougeray."
. Montauron made a gesture which showed that he was acquainted Viscount d'Amaulis' friend.
Monsieur Bouret knows him," resumed Savinien, "and thinks well m."
Oh, I don't think ill of him," replied the banker, "nor did I ever any one speak badly about him. He has no debts, although he spends od deal. He makes money, no doubt, and I don't think that he does a wrong way. Still——"
Say what you mean, sir," said the viscount, seeing that M. Montauron ared to hesitate in what he was about to add.
Well, I don't know exactly how to express what I wish to say. My and my friendship for Monsieur de Tremorin would, perhaps, excuse till I should not like to wound your feelings——"
I am sure that you would not."
I thank you for saying so; and, since that is your opinion, I will say Monsieur Fougeray is not sought after by Parisians of real position. ink that your uncle wouldn't care to have you become intimate with a who does not belong to the society of which you yourself form part."
Indeed, sir; but I do not belong to any society as yet, for I have ely come here, and I have no intention of belonging to George's set. he first place I have no money to spend with him."
'Is that your only reason?' asked M. Montauron, smiling.
'I have, also, others for keeping away," said Savinien; "but that suffices. I had, on the day of my arrival, a specimen of the kind of life ch my friend George leads—what with the dinner, theatre, supper, and n. My small income would not enable me to partake often of this kind enjoyment, which, besides, has no special charm for me. I must add, vever, that, during this transient trip into Parisian regions unknown ne, George only introduced me to well-bred men."
"That is something, but appearances are deceitful. Monsieur ngeray must be intimate with people of his own sort."
"Really, sir," said Savinien, somewhat offended, "I am sure that ir judgment is just and impartial, but I should be obliged to you if you uld express yourself more clearly. George was a law-student with me; have lost sight of him for years: he received me, however, with a diality which pleased me, and, although I have no intention of leading kind of life which he does, I nevertheless rely upon seeing a good l of him during my stay in Paris. However, should I find that he ived his money from any dishonourable source, I should cease all inter- rse with him."
"I meant nothing of that kind, believe me. Monsieur Fougeray is like ny others who pursue fortune eagerly, and who often succeed without sely considering the means by which they obtain victory."
"I don't know what you allude to by the word 'means.' Be kind ough to state precisely what you do mean, for, if there were anything reputable——"
"Disreputable! Oh, no! Besides, the meaning of words has greatly anged of late years. Many people gamble in stock without being less eemed for that."
"I shall not undertake to pronounce upon the morality or immorality operations on 'Change, but you, sir, go there."

"I? That is different. I am the manager of a large bank which has to employ the funds subscribed by its shareholders to the best advantage. Hence the absolute necessity for buying and selling stock. On certain days I am even obliged to personally direct the agents who operate for the Provincial Bank. For instance, yesterday when I returned home after the scene you know of, I was informed that bad news as to political matters had arrived, and that an important running-down of shares and Rente was to be feared. I had scarcely recovered from the trouble of the morning, and I was, you will easily believe it, but little disposed to attend to business. It was necessary, however, that I should go at once to the Bourse to watch operations. Bouret went there also, and we were fortunate enough to realise a large amount for our shareholders. They might have met with a loss, had we been less zealous and less competent to see what would occur. Fortunately, I guessed that a manœuvre had been resorted to in order to run down the prices, and that the close would be a running-up."

"George Fougeray thought as you did, sir, and I believe he operated accordingly."

"Oh, I know that! He was in the secret. He even contributed, without knowing it, to the success of Bouret and myself. We had been informed in time that, after having brought about the running-down, he turned to running up, and, as every one knows he has private information, we followed his lead."

"Information? From whom?"

"You ask me too much, my dear sir. I make it a rule to accuse no one without being able to prove what I say. Now, I have no proof of this. What is certain, however, is that, at about two o'clock, an official despatch was posted up inside the Bourse, contradicting in the most precise manner the alarming rumours afloat. Certain persons, perhaps, knew of it before it was exhibited, and it had, and must have had, a great effect on the public funds. These people were speculating on a certainty."

"Then you think that my friend George——"

"Monsieur Fougeray is very intimate with a Monsieur Rheinthal, who is thought to be the intimate friend of a person of great influence."

"Ah, yes! I saw that Monsieur Rheinthal talking to George yesterday, before the Bourse opened."

"Others saw him besides you, and directed their operations upon the same basis as those of Monsieur Fougeray."

"But, if it is true that George can foresee when shares will vary in value, he ought by this time to be a millionaire several times over."

"No, his credit is not yet sufficiently well established to enable him to enter into large operations. Still he must have done very well, for the powerful people who employ him let him glean in the fields after they have gathered in their own harvest."

"His credit?" repeated Savinien, whose eyes were beginning to open. "Excuse my ignorance, but all that you say to me is entirely new."

"You don't clearly understand Monsieur Fougeray's position. I will explain it to you. A few years ago he entered a broker's office as a clerk for the cash payments, that is to say the most important and least remunerative operations. He was active and able. He very soon formed connections which enabled him to start in business on his own account. He succeeded very well, it appears, and began to operate on a larger scale, still his ventures never exceeded three thousand francs' worth of Rente.

broker would have thought him good for any more important operations. ow, however, he is thought to be so well informed that he would find yers or sellers for thirty thousand. That is a great deal when a man sn't a well-established fortune, but it is not enough to enrich a speculator ddenly. A franc's difference between the price of buying and selling on irty thousand represents ten thousand francs, no more—and differences a franc rarely offer."

"If a man operated on three hundred thousand, what then?"

"The difference of a franc would represent a hundred thousand francs. ut Monsieur Fougeray wouldn't find an agent who would consent to pay large a sum for him in case of loss. Galipot himself would not venture do so unless your friend gave him good security."

"Galipot?" repeated Savinien, who perfectly well remembered the rty in question.

"He is one of the most lucky and daring of our unlicensed brokers. onsieur Fougeray is one of his customers. You must have seen them lking on 'Change at the opening yesterday."

"Yes, and to my utter astonishment, George Fougeray introduced me this Monsieur Galipot."

"Ah, indeed! That was strange. Do you remember what he said hen he introduced you?"

"No, not exactly. I remember, however, that Monsieur Galipot asked e if I were Monsieur de Trémorin's nephew."

"And you answered in the affirmative? Then I can understand why alipot came to ask Bouret whether your uncle was a solid man."

"What! Did he dare——"

"Oh, he had no hesitation in doing so, and I now see clearly why he sked for information. Monsieur Fougeray used your name to operate. idn't you know it!"

"He did so without my permission. He told me so after 'Change, and would not believe it."

"But you must have received a notice this morning from the broker who operated."

"A notice?" stammered Savinien; "yes, I received one, and I confess hat I understand absolutely nothing about it. Indeed, I have not tried o understand, for I thought that the broker must have made a mistake in writing to me instead of to George Fougeray."

"I think not," said M. Montauron, smiling. "Brokers don't make uch mistakes, they know very well for whom they operate. But I can nswer you better if you have the letter about you and will show it o me."

"Here it is," replied Viscount d'Amaulis, who wished to know exactly n what situation his friend had placed him.

M. Montauron had scarcely looked at the note than he exclaimed:

"This is astonishing!"

"What is it?" said Savinien, anxiously.

"I should never have thought Monsieur Fougeray so daring—it is true he risked nothing. Do you know for how much he speculated yesterday?"

"He told me, but the figure conveyed no idea to my mind, and I forgot it."

"Well then, dear sir, your friend began by selling three hundred thousand francs worth of Rentes. Then, when all was afoot, he bought them back at a lower price to what he had sold at; then, before the close,

he bought six hundred thousand francs worth of Rente, and resold it on advantageous terms. Indeed, he liquidated everything on the spot."

"Yes, I understand that, but I am no better informed. The jargon of Bourse business is Greek to me, and I cannot guess at the final result."

"I will speak more clearly. The three hundred thousand were sold at the rate of eighty-two francs thirty-five centimes, and bought back at eighty-two francs. The difference is thirty-five centimes, which makes thirty-five thousand francs.

"Profit?"

"Certainly."

"That is enormous."

"It is nothing to what followed. He bought at the rate of eighty-two francs six hundred thousand francs' worth of Rente, which was sold again at eighty-three. The difference being a franc, the profit is two hundred thousand francs. The sum total of the profits is two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs, less the brokerage."

"Is it possible?"

"Nothing can be clearer."

"If George has such luck often, he will be a millionaire very soon."

"He will be, and so may you. It is a very fine beginning. One hundred and seventeen thousand five hundred francs for your share."

"My share! I have no part in it, as I did not speculate."

"These people speculated for you, which is exactly the same thing."

"Excuse me? I am free not to take what I have no right to."

"I think that you are wrong, and I will prove it to you. I know precisely the limit of Monsieur Fougeray's credit, and I assure you that Galipot operated for you. He knew that Fougeray was to have half, but that you were security in case of loss for the full amount of the differences."

"But had I lost two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs, sir, I should have been obliged to sell all I possess to pay the amount, and, besides that, the land which I own would not have sufficed to furnish such a sum."

"Monsieur de Trémorin would have paid for you, undoubtedly."

"I am sure that he would not have done so. My uncle has a daughter, and even were his fortune likely to revert to me, it is not large enough to enable him to make so great a sacrifice."

A discreet smile played about the lips of the director of the Provincial Bank, but he said nothing as regarded the means of the viscount's uncle.

"I know Monsieur de Trémorin," he resumed, "and I am certain he would not have allowed his nephew's name to suffer. Bourse debts are debts of honour, although they are, like gambling debts, unrecognised by law. I only tell you this, sir, to show you in what a position your former schoolfellow would have placed you, had the speculation failed."

"Really," exclaimed Savinien, "it is incredible that a broker should plunge into such operations in the name of a man whom he does not know, and who gave him no orders."

"He does not know you, but he knows Galipot, and he knows that Galipot would have paid up had he lost."

"But if this Galipot was responsible, how is it that he had so much confidence in me? He didn't know me."

"Didn't you say just now that Monsieur Fougeray had spoken about your uncle to him. That was quite enough. Galipot only wants to earn

brokerage, and he went to Bouret to make inquiries. Bouret told that your uncle was honourable and reliable. I should not be surprised if your friend had said that you were a large landowner. Nothing makes more impression than that on an unlicensed broker."

"It seems to me that George did say something like that," muttered Jinien. "If I had known why he was talking in that style, I— —"

"You would have contradicted him, no doubt. You would have perhaps have been wrong."

"How?"

"I will explain that presently, but I must first of all show you clearly how Monsieur Fougeray worked. He received information from high quarters, transmitted to him by Monsieur Rheinthal. He was charged to bring about a fall during the first hour on 'Change, in order to allow certain speculators to buy back at a low rate. The parties who worked the affair knew that a reassuring despatch would come at about two o'clock. Monsieur Fougeray knew it also, and wished to profit by the secret confided to him. But he wanted to make a sum which would prove really remunerative. As his credit with Galipot has its limits, he thought of using yours. You will, no doubt, repeat that you have none, as you are unknown at the Bourse; but Monsieur Fougeray created a credit for you without informing you. You may be sure enough that he sowed the ground by telling Galipot and others that you were a gentleman from the provinces who had come to speculate, and possessed large means. I must add that the brokers would have looked more closely into the matter had the speculation appeared at all risky to them. But they knew that your friend had conferred with Rheinthal before Bourse hours."

"Yes, it is clear," said Savinien. "I understand now that George has played me a very nasty trick, and I will not profit by manœuvres of which I utterly disapprove. I shall not reply to this broker, and I will not receive any money."

"But Monsieur Fougeray will wish to have his part of it."

"Let him obtain it, I will not prevent him. He shall have all of it if he wishes."

"You make a mistake, my dear sir. The broker only knows your name, and only will pay to you."

"Well, I shall go to him and declare that all the money belongs to George Fougeray."

"He will not be satisfied with that."

"Then I shall tell him how it was all done."

"I should not advise you to do that."

"Why not, will you tell me?"

"In the first place, it would ruin your friend's credit, and injure him to the greatest possible extent. If it were known in the Bourse world that he used any subterfuge to operate in large amounts, he would in future be unable to find an agent to work for him. You would do him great injury, and I do not think that you wish to harm him."

"No, certainly not; for until yesterday I have had every reason for liking him. But he deserves a good lesson."

"I agree with you, but this would hardly be the occasion to give it to him. By telling the truth you would harm yourself."

"I don't see how."

"Remember, dear sir, that you would be accused of being Monsieur Fougeray's accomplice. It wouldn't be believed that he had acted without

consulting you, and you would appear to have agreed with him to deceive an unlicensed broker as to your solvency."

"But as I abandon my profits——"

"You cannot do so. The broker will require you to receive the money, and even if it remained in his hands, it would none the less be yours. It would be said that you had left it to serve as a cover, that is to say, a guarantee for future operations."

"And what if I draw it out and place the whole of it in George Fougeray's hands?"

"No one would know that or believe it."

"What would you have me do?"

"The only thing that would not compromise you. Say nothing, receive the whole amount, and you can compel your friend, if you choose, to receive it from you. But we will return to this subject, if you like, later on. I see Madame Montauron at the end of the walk, and you must allow me to profit by this opportunity to introduce you."

While M. Montauron and Viscount d'Amaulis conversed together, they had walked round the park without observing that they had done so, and they had returned to their starting-point. At the end of the pathway they could perceive a lady attired in a white morning dress. It was Madame Montauron who was advancing slowly to meet her husband, and carelessly picking some white lilac without appearing to observe the presence of a stranger in the garden.

Savinien felt disturbed, but he did not allow this to be seen, and prepared to play the part required by circumstances.

"She certainly saw me from her window when I rang," said he to himself. "She knew that she would find me here, and she seeks this perilous interview. She is too artful, but I will show her that I am her match."

He momentarily forgot the evil deeds of George Fougeray, and only thought of how he might escape from his annoying position. The look in the husband's eyes proved that he had still a lingering doubt. Indeed, Montauron had glanced at the viscount to see whether he showed any emotion at the sight of Madame Montauron; however, he must have been reassured, for Savinien's manner was irreproachable—that of a man of the world about to be presented to a lady to whom he is as yet unknown. There was a danger to be avoided, and he avoided it. He did not forget that he had already seen her without speaking to her, that her husband knew this, and that it was as well not to pretend having forgotten this chance encounter.

"I ought to have known Madame Montauron in the street," said he, in a low tone, to the banker; "as it was, her beauty and distinguished appearance struck me."

Montauron smiled, well pleased with this compliment, and greeted his wife with a radiant face. "My dear Aurélie," he began, "here is Monsieur Savinien d'Amaulis, whom we have been so impatiently expecting since Monsieur de Trémorin announced his coming. I am glad that you have come down to the garden, as it enables me to introduce him to you before our reception evening."

"Thanks," replied the lady. "On Friday I belong to all our guests, and I should have had no opportunity of telling Monsieur d'Amaulis how much pleasure it gives us to receive him. How long have you been in Paris?" she added, addressing the viscount, who was astonished by her coolness.

"Two days, madame," replied Savinien, "and I beg of you to excuse my tardy visit."

"Don't apologise, my dear sir," cried Montauron. "You could not run to the Parc Monceau as soon as you left the train. But we hold you now, and I hope that we will see you often. Our house will always be open to you. I should be very glad if you came to live in this neighbourhood. I presume that you are at a hotel?"

This question was asked with a careless air, but Savinien guessed that it had a purpose, for the banker was looking askance at his wife.

"Yes," said Yvonne's cousin: "I am in the Rue du Helder, in some furnished rooms, where my uncle puts up when he comes to Paris."

Madame Montauron did not show the slightest emotion on hearing the name of the street which must have brought back such burning recollections, and her husband, delighted with the result of the trial to which he had subjected her, resumed gaily: "Monsieur de Trémorin sent you there, no doubt, and you were right to go, but I think that he ought to have remembered that you would be very far from us, who are his friends and wish to be yours. I am sure that he would not think it amiss if you left the Rue du Helder to come nearer the Avenue Ruysdaël.'

"Certainly not, but I don't know whether I should find a hotel that would suit me near the Parc Monceau," replied Savinien, somewhat surprised by this eagerness to monopolise him. "In these aristocratic quarters there are only private residences, I presume?"

"Or very unpresentable furnished rooms. By why shouldn't you take a suite which you could furnish yourself? You will be here for six months—so Monsieur de Trémorin said to me—and it is really worth while to live in that way. Ah! I remember a house belonging to me in which there is a vacant suite that would suit you exactly. It is in the Rue Rembrandt, ten steps from here. We will go to see it."

"Really, my dear," said Madame Montauron, smiling, "if you insist so much, Monsieur d'Amaulis will think that you are trying to palm off on him some rooms which you cannot let."

"Oh, I am sure that Monsieur d'Amaulis will think nothing of the kind. I should be only too glad to put my suite of rooms at his disposal if he would accept of it."

"I don't doubt it," replied Savinien, "and I should be glad to be your tenant on the same conditions that you would make with any one else, but I came to Paris with a credit of six thousand francs, and if I bought my furniture I should scarcely be able to pay for it."

"Is that all!" exclaimed M. Montauron. "Need I say that my cash-box is at your disposal?"

"Thank you, sir, but——"

"You won't accept? Let that pass; but you can furnish your rooms without borrowing. Haven't you at a broker's a sum of money but a tenth part of which would suffice to pay for a very handsome set of furniture suitable for a bachelor?"

"Excuse, me, sir. You forget that this sum——"

"I don't forget it, and I have proved to you, I believe, that you cannot abandon this money without seriously embarrassing your friend. I leave it for you to judge, my dear Aurélie. Monsieur d'Amaulis went to the Bourse yesterday. He had never been there before, and one of his friends, without consulting him——"

"What!" interrupted Madame Montauron. "You were at the

Bourse yesterday. Monsieur d'Amaulis! Did you enter a pastry-cook's shop close by at about two o'clock?"

"Yes, madame, and I——"

"Then I saw you there. When my husband introduced you just now it seemed to me that I had seen you before, but I could not remember where. I know it now. You remained standing for ten minutes or so a couple of steps from the table where I was taking an ice, and talking with Madame de Gravigny, a pretty blonde, whom you must certainly have noticed, and who was telling me about speculating, which is a thing I don't understand. I remember that you looked attentively at me," added Madame Montauron, smiling.

"I admit that," said Savinien, with a bow. He understood her motive in speaking thus, and, besides, he wished to assist her.

"You saw my husband also, as you were still there when he came in. Why didn't you speak to him then?"

"Because I did not yet know him."

"True; how thoughtless I am! I forgot that you could not guess the name of a person you had never seen."

"One of my friends who came in told me your name just as you were getting into your carriage, but that would have been a bad time to accost Monsieur Montauron."

"If I had known that you were Monsieur Trémorin's nephew, I should not have stood upon ceremony to shake hands with you anywhere," cried the husband, full of satisfaction at this apparently natural explanation. "But I scarcely noticed you. My wife, on the contrary, took a good look at you. You see what it is to be a handsome man," he added, gaily, seemingly thinking that he had made a happy hit.

He rejoiced in his own mind, and he was not alone in this. Madame Montauron flattered herself that she had managed this matter with superior skill, and Savinien felt that his position as regarded the banker was fully cleared up.

"What a strange city Paris is!" sighed Madame Montauron. "Anything may happen here! One may pass by a friend without knowing it, and meet an enemy without being able to avoid it."

"Much stranger things than that occur," laughed the husband; "for instance, making a hundred thousand francs on 'Change without knowing that one has speculated. I really must tell you this story, my dear Aurélie—but you are not well to-day, and the air is sharp out here. Shall we go indoors with Monsieur d'Amaulis?"

"I should like to show him the conservatory if he has a few moments to give us," replied Madame Montauron, glancing at Savinien, who saw her design.

"I am exceedingly fond of flowers," he said, eagerly.

"Then come, sir; my husband will help me to do the honours of our winter garden."

"Willingly," replied the banker, "but here is our friend Bouret coming, and when he appears here in the morning it is because some important matter brings him. I will go and speak to him; in five minutes I shall know what he wants, and will then return to you."

Savinien drew nearer to Madame Montauron. "It is heaven that sends him," said she, in a low tone, as soon as her husband had gone a few steps away. "We shall be alone for an instant, and I must speak with you."

Montauron had walked rapidly towards his partner. He would, no

ubt, have been less disposed to talk to him about the affairs of the ovincial Bank had he not been completely at ease. But all the trials ich he had imposed upon Savinien and his wife had resulted in their nplete justification. So he had no further reason for not leaving them ne together.

Savinien congratulated himself on having relieved the mind of Madame ntauron, in whom he felt interested, although he struggled against the mpathy which he felt: at anyrate he would have liked the matter to d there, for he felt no wish to continue mixing himself up in the dy's affairs. He pitied her as much as he blamed her, but he did not sh to be compromised on her account. He could not, however, avoid e conversation which she wished to hold with him; he owed her some planation, and, if needful, some advice. A man does not abandon a man after saving her. A service of such a kind exacts others from the rson who has rendered it. The viscount was caught in a trap, and fully alised that this was the case. He had made a sign to Madame Montauron to signify that he was at her orders, and then he walked on beside r and waited for her to show him into the conservatory.

M. Bouret, more lively than ever, had bowed to them from afar, and d indeed seemed disposed to approach them, but Montauron took his rtner's arm and walked on with him slowly. They spoke together in a ne of animation, even paused at times to exchange their ideas more at eir ease, as often happens to persons who are conversing on a subject of terest. To leave them in the distance was easy enough and Madame ontauron did so. "Come, sir," said she, walking rapidly on. "The nservatory is large and we can be alone for a few moments. Until e are, let us talk about trivial subjects. We are watched, perhaps."

Savinien, in conformity with this advice, started a conversation upon ne beauties of the garden, raising his head to measure the height of the ees with his eyes, and pointing to the pretty effects devised by an artist landscape-gardening. While taking this precaution and prolonging his antomimic gestures, he admired not only the coolness and skill of Madame Montauron, but her attire and person also.

She wore an exquisite morning-dress of satin and white barège, trimmed ith flounces of valenciennes, and cut short enough to display her pretty et encased in high heeled slippers: a bit of gold lace sparkled on her lack hair, which was carelessly caught up off her face, and in her hand he carried a Chinese parasol with a jade handle.

When Savinien had seen her at the Ladies' Exchange he had been truck by the brilliancy of her eyes, but he had not observed that, though he was no longer very young, her beauty was of a kind that owed othing to art. The full light of a May morning is pitiless to faded beauies; but Madame Montauron did not need the dimness of a boudoir to ide her age. Even in full daylight her opaque white skin did not show wrinkle. The blue shade around her large eyes had disappeared, and er features retained no traces of the emotions of the day before. She ad the engaging and restful look of a hostess doing the honours of her rounds to an agreeable visitor. Her beauty was incontestable, her face ympathetic. Her eyes spoke, her lips expressed goodness. It was impossible to confound this adorable woman with the dolls that fill Parisian drawing-rooms. She was a creature whom a man might love passionately. Moreover, she was destitute of any semblance of coquetry.

"She has deceived her husband, no doubt," thought Savinien, "but I would venture that there is a drama in her life—a mystery."

They reached the door of a winter-garden fit for a prince. All the plants of the tropics were gathered together therein, and one might have almost fancied one's self in a virgin forest, so vigorous were the growths. However, all the apparent wildness was the effect of art. The finest sand strewed the walks, and comfortable seats could be seen on all sides. A fountain plashed in a marble basin amid all this verdure, a rippling stream coursed amid the flower-beds, and at the end there was a large aviary filled with rare birds.

Madame Montauron entered after quickly glancing in the rear, and ascertaining that the two financiers were far off; Savinien followed her, making ready to speak fast and to the purpose, for time was precious.

"You have saved more than my life, you have saved my honour," began the lady. "Thanks to you I was able to fly, and with unexpected good luck I was able to return home before my husband appeared."

"He watched for you during more than an hour at the corner of the Rue du Helder," said Savinien.

"It was that which enabled me to escape. Our house has a door in the Rue Murillo, a door of which I alone have the key, and which our servants know nothing about. When Monsieur Montauron reached my room he found me there, and I had even had time to change my dress."

"He is convinced that you had not left the house, and that he was deceived by a false resemblance."

"Did he tell you that?"

"Yes, madame, and I gave him some explanations which finally dispelled all his fears, if he still had any remaining. I told him that the woman he had followed had gone into the room of one of my neighbours on the third floor, and that she had remained there all day, and he so fully believed all I told him that he apologised to me for the scene he had made, and urgently begged of me to keep the matter a secret from you especially."

"Ah! I knew very well that the Baron de Trémorin's nephew would not fail me!"

"You know my uncle?" asked Savinien.

"He was the means of bringing about my marriage. Did he never mention my name to you?"

"Never, madame. But this morning I received a letter in which he expressly enjoined upon me to solicit the favour of an introduction to you."

"I will tell you later on how it was that Monsieur de Trémorin became interested in me, and when you know my past you will understand all that I have suffered for twelve years; but we haven't a moment to lose, and I beg you to reply to what I am about to ask."

"Speak, madame."

"Is it true that this foreigner, who lodged above you, has gone away?"

"The hotel-keeper so assured me."

"Did he tell you his name?"

"He said that he called himself Count Aparanda; that he was a Swede, and that he was driven to the Northern Railway Station."

Madame Montauron started, and resumed in a husky voice: "Did the hotel-keeper speak of a child?"

"He has never seen any child. The traveller had absolutely no one

with him during the ten days which he spent at the hotel—not even yourself, madame, so said the landlord."

"Then he went away alone," murmured the lady, more and more troubled.

"Yes, madame; but he may not have left Paris."

"Why do you think that?"

"I believe that I met him a few hours after he left the hotel.

"You knew him, then?" asked Madame Montauron, eagerly.

"I had seen him from my window as he crossed the court-yard of the hotel. I then only saw his back, but I observed his figure and his costume especially. When I saw him again he wore a cap, as before, an overcoat, and furred boots."

"And he was still alone, as before?"

"Quite alone," said Savinien.

"And no letter, no message!" murmured Madame Montauron, in distress. "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"If I can serve you any further, make use of me, madame," said Savinien, much affected.

The native of Brittany spoke thus because he could not control his first impulses, and was always led away by his generous feelings.

"I accept your offer," replied Madame Montauron, without any hesitation. "When I see you again I will tell you what you can do to deliver me from the torments which tear my heart. I must see you again—not here—and I cannot return to the hotel where you live. Why don't you follow the advice my husband gave you just now?"

"To live in a house belonging to him!" exclaimed Savinien. "Can you think of such a thing, madame?"

"The rooms he would let to you are on the ground floor. There is a little garden which, like mine, communicates with the Parc Monceau, and I will tell you how we can meet. You can then give me back the casket which you consented to keep for me, and which I dare not ask you to return to me in presence of my servants."

"I have not got the casket," replied the viscount, sadly.

"You have not got it!" exclaimed Madame Montauron, who saw through the glass doors that her husband was coming down the walk with M. Bouret.

They had been very long talking, but they were at last reaching the winter-garden, and were about to enter it. Fortunately, they halted for a moment to close their conversation, which seemed to be of great interest, and Savinien still had time to say: "You must remember, madame, that I had refused to keep the deposit which you wished to leave with me. On going away you—perhaps voluntarily—forgot the casket on the table. I noticed it when it was too late to hurry after you. I could not restore it to you, as you had gone, and I could not keep it in a hotel room. My first thought was to place it in a safe spot, and I naturally thought of the banking-house where my uncle had opened an account for me."

"What! the bank which my husband directs?" asked Madame Montauron, in a state of mingled surprise and agitation.

"I was then ignorant who you were, madame."

"And you took the casket——"

"To the Provincial Bank," interrupted Savinien.

"I am lost!" murmured Madame Montauron, quite overwhelmed.

"Lost! Why, madame? This casket is shut up in a compartment of

the vaults of which I alone have the key. No one knows that it is there, and no one will know, as it cannot be touched without my permission. You don't know how these deposits are made. There is a vault——"

"Yes, I know about that, but it is sufficient for the casket to have been seen. My husband knows it."

"But it wasn't he who received it, and it is not to him that I shall apply when I take it out."

"Then you saw some subordinate," said Madame Montauron, somewhat reassured.

"Yes, that is to say, it came about in this manner: I had a letter of credit to present, and a clerk told me that I must have it looked over by the under manager."

"Monsieur Bouret?"

"Exactly. He knew my name, and gave orders to show me into his private room. I did not care to see him, but could not decline. He received me in the most polite manner, and, while I was talking, remarked this casket which I had in my hand. He then explained to me the system of the house with regard to deposits. I thought that I was doing wisely in acting as he proposed."

"He asked you no questions?"

"To find out the nature of the contents? No, madame. It appears that it is against the rule. Deposits are received without examination."

"He may think, then, that there was merely some gold inside, or some bank-notes, or—or jewels."

"I do not know what he thought, but he did not ask me anything on the subject. He went with me to the vault, and was near at hand when I made the deposit."

"He knows in what place the casket is kept, then?"

"I doubt very much whether he remembers the number of the compartment. Why should he? The depositing, which took place before him, was nothing unusual. He sees the same thing every day."

"No doubt, but I know him. He is inclined to meddle with other people's affairs, and must have wondered why Viscount d'Amaulis, who had reached Paris only the day before, should bring a casket to the Provincial Bank. He must have thought that, if it contained valuables, you would have left it at your château in Brittany, and with his suspicious nature he must have suspected——"

"That it contained letters?" hastily interrupted Savinien. "I think that he did speak of persons depositing secret correspondence and compromising papers—it was, perhaps, a sly allusion. Whatever his meaning, however, I said nothing more, nor did he."

"I hope that he will not take it into his head to mention the matter to my husband," murmured Madame Montauron.

"It is altogether improbable that he will, and, if you wish it, I will take out the casket to-morrow; you can let me know how I can return it, and I will hasten to——"

"When we meet again," interrupted Madame Montauron, "I will explain to you what is to be done—on Friday, perhaps, if I can escape from my guests for a moment; but here is Monsieur Montauron. He is coming into the conservatory with Monsieur Bouret. Now! let me show you my flowers," added the lady of the Avenue Ruysdael, raising her voice. She then led Savinien to a corner which they had not yet examined, as she had probably kept it in reserve to serve as a subject of conversation

nen her husband returned. It was truly marvellous. There were there aps of rhododendrons of every colour, huge clumps of azaleas of all the tes of the rainbow, and some superb roses of all the varieties that modern rticulture has produced. "Here is a 'Grand-Duke Charles,'" said adame Montauron, touching with her slender fingers a magnificent ower which glowed like a ruby.

"You admire my collection, don't you?" asked the banker, now pproaching. "Aurélie formed it, and I think that it is equal to any rticultural exhibition. I am sure that Monsieur de Tremorin would like see it, for I know that he understands all about flowers."

Savinien was fond of flowers also, but at that moment he was thinking of he little heatherbell which Yvonne had gathered, and which he carried ear his heart, for he had carefully placed it in his pocket-book.

"I," resumed Montauron, "am fonder of the simple flowers that grow the country gardens, pinks, sweet-peas, asters, and mallows, but after l I am only a savage. Ask Bouret, who every day reproaches me for not king oddities in furniture."

Bouret, who had so far kept himself discreetly in the background, roused by this remark of his partner to come forward and bow to Madame Montauron, who nodded somewhat coldly. He then extended is hand to Savinien, who would willingly have dispensed with the under- anager's company, but had no reason for treating him with rudeness.

"Well, viscount" said Bouret, with that familiar air of his, "you must be pleased with your first attempt on 'Change. Galipot told me this orning that you had netted two hundred thousand. Your venture was master-stroke."

"Indeed!" began Savinien, stammering and flushing to his eyes. "But he gentleman is wrong, and I assure you that——"

"Oh! I know that you will have to share with Fougeray, who must ave kept you well informed, but you will still have a neat sum left, and hope that you will use it to open an account at the Provincial Bank, a urrent account which will prevent the necessity of breaking in upon your etter of credit. Would you believe it, my dear partner," added he, ddressing M. Montauron, "Monsieur d'Amaulis, the nephew of Baron e Trémorin, drew out a pitiful sum of fifty louis yesterday. It is true hat he deposited valuables, and that gave me a chance to show him our aults and the working of our system. He is now one of our subscribers. His compartment is No. 919: he has his key, his word, and we are respon- ible for a very pretty casket which he left with us."

"A casket!" said M. Montauron, with a frown.

"I mean a kind of coffer in fine steelwork. If it were made in Brittany, t must have been by some Parisian workman, unless it be an antique—I adn't time to examine it closely—but I shouldn't be surprised if it dated rom the Renaissance—Montauron knows that I am a connoisseur."

Savinien, overwhelmed by this flow of talk, hung his head to hide his flushed countenance, and could not find a word to answer the giddy ndividual whose chattering put him on thorns.

However, Madame Montauron, who was as much disturbed as he, came to his relief. "Gentlemen," said she, "as you mix business and flowers together, you must excuse my leaving you."

"Oh, madame!" exclaimed Bouret, gallantly, "the punishment is too evere, and we don't deserve it. I beg your pardon, and I assure you that I will not say another word about money before you. I hear

too much about it elsewhere. Besides, I am going. I came to tell Montauron of a difficulty which has occurred with one of our agents with regard to some orders given yesterday on 'Change. I have done so, and I am expected in the Avenue de l'Opéra. I must make haste."

This said, the lively under-manager took leave of Madame Montauron, inflicted a second hand-shaking upon Viscount d'Amaulis, and went off without the slightest attempt being made to detain him.

The banker had become thoughtful, and although his wife showed no sign of the anxiety she felt, Savinien understood what she was enduring, and thought that his best course was to leave. M. Montauron doubtless thought the same, for he said:

"I hope that when you write to your uncle you will say that we have met, and shall soon meet again. I hope, too, that you will soon consent to become my tenant for the period of your stay in Paris."

Savinien glanced stealthily at Madame Montauron, and read in her eyes that she hoped that he would take the rooms in the Rue Murillo. He also saw that she wished him to go. He, therefore, thanked the husband for the obliging offer, gave him to understand that he was disposed to accept it, and then departed, much more anxious than when he arrived. The visit upon which he had relied to clear away every difficulty had led to complications of a new kind.

IV.

"My dear fellow, you must certainly belong to some club if you wish to be thought anything of," said the Marquis Adhémar de Laffemas to Savinien, whom he had just met at the Boulevard des Italiens.

It was two days after Viscount d'Amaulis' visit to M. Montauron; four o'clock had struck at the Bourse, and the young native of Brittany, already quite acclimated, was leaving a pretty house in the Rue Richelieu, one of those six-storey houses with four staircases, which are built in that part of Paris for the express use of tailors, dressmakers, and brokers.

"I should like it very well," modestly replied Savinien, "but I am only a bird of passage here in Paris, and I am quite unknown."

"That is my reason for proposing you should join my club."

"What do you mean?" quickly asked Savinien, suspecting some intentional impertinence.

"The deuce! you are as hot-headed as the colt that I just bought at the Chamant stud farm," cried the marquis, with a laugh. "I haven't the least intention, my dear cousin, of insulting you. You don't know how the land lies here, and I wish to tell you, that's all. The best way to get into a club is to be brought there an utter stranger, providing one has an honourable name, and a competency, of course. If you are known, some people always want to keep you out, whatever your merits may be, and take a pleasure in blackballing you when you are voted for. Only lately a very fine young man was refused at our place because his nose was crooked—yours isn't, I beg to say—and another because he wore too long a waistcoat. Now, that is not the case with you; you dress well. I really wonder whether that pair of trousers was made at Plouër?"

"No. At Rennes."

"I will make a note of that to the credit of the old capital of the

Duchy of Brittany, and I resume my discourse. Last week a third candidate was blackballed—you will never guess why—well, because he had got the better of that rough bear Pontaumur in the good graces of Blanche Taupier. You know Blanche Taupier of the Nouveautés Theatre, the actress who drives every day in the Bois de Boulogne with a pair of coffee-coloured jades, who look like the legendary horses which were used at the coronation of Napoleon the First."

Savinien shook his head to signify that the fame of this damsel had not reached the manor of Plouër.

"Good! You never saw her! I congratulate you. She is worse than her ponies, which are ugly enough. Well, then, my dear boy, Pontaumur, who is an idiot, has nevertheless some influence at the club, and he betirred himself to such effect that he kept out his fortunate rival. This might happen to you if you had even been here but a month, for you can't think of avoiding the pretty creatures who drive round the lakes, and the one whom you may flatter by your preference will be sure to be admired by some one else, whom you will supplant, no doubt, but who may revenge himself if he happens to belong to our club."

"I'm not afraid of any such event," muttered Yvonne's cousin.

"There is no telling, my dear fellow, and I advise you to profit by your being a stranger, to put yourself up for election at once. I will bring the matter forward, and there will be no great merit in doing so. I'll propose, then, the Viscount d'Amaulis, of a noble and honourable Breton family—the name alone would suffice—and, besides, there must be some old fellows in the club who remember uncle Trémorin, and will back you. As I was saying: Viscount d'Amaulis, twenty-four years old, related to the Loudinières, the Laffemas—to whom I belong myself—with a fortune of—how much is your fortune, cousin?"

"I have six thousand francs a year," candidly replied Savinien.

"Oh, indeed! I thought you were richer than that, but no matter! You will marry an heiress some fine day. Your cousin, Madame de Loudinières, always has one on hand, without speaking of those whom you will meet, if you choose to go into the society to be found at bankers' houses. I will not dwell upon the theme, then. I will say, 'With landed estates;' that always sounds well."

"They all say the same thing," thought the last of the Amaulis, who remembered George Fougeray's words as to the influence of land on credit.

"You will be unanimously elected," concluded M. de Laffemas, "and you will see that it is a good thing to be one of us. In the first place, it is an advantage in betting at races. We know all about the tips! I will take you to the races and show you how to make a book in a way that will make you sure of winning. Since the first spring meeting I have thirteen hundred louis to the bad, but I wouldn't give my future profits this year for three thousand. You will see how it will be at the autumn races."

"I shall miss them, as I shall return to Plouër then."

"Now, don't tell me that! You talk like a schoolboy on his holidays. You will stay as long as your money holds out, and I suppose that you didn't venture upon Parisian waters without any ship-biscuit in your hold."

"I have a trifling account which my uncle opened for me."

"He might have opened a large one, for he is very well off, that worthy Trémorin. My mother can tell you to a figure all the fortunes in Brittany, and she was saying only yesterday that your uncle has millions

stored away. It appears that he has a daughter, and that she is a charming girl. Is there a marriage afoot? I shouldn't pity you in the least. But don't hurry. There is always time enough to settle down. Meantime, I will take you to the races on Sunday."

"I shall be delighted to go with you."

"And I'll venture to say that you will win. People always win the first time they bet—besides, I'll tell you the safest horses. But what ails you? You keep putting your hand into your side pocket. Did you just leave Rothschild's?" asked the marquis, with a loud laugh.

"No; but I am not in the habit of carrying bank-notes about with me, and I have just received a large sum from a broker."

"Already! Ah! there now! you are much further ahead than I thought. Only ten days here, and already gambling on 'Change! And to good effect, too, it would seem. So much the better, cousin! so much taken from the enemy! The Bourse was invented to regild the escutcheons of the nobles who lost their fortunes in the Revolution. I have tried it, and I did well. The worst of it is that you meet such horrid people; but one gets used to that. However, take my advice, and never run on a *series*. That sort of thing is only good at Monaco. Under the colonnade at the Bourse only sudden strokes amount to anything. Don't go there unless you have some news that has not yet been turned to account, and, when you have, go in head foremost! Unfortunately, those chances seldom happen with people like ourselves, as the government neglects informing us beforehand."

"Then, if you were informed, you would not feel any hesitation in acting upon such information?"

"Do you take me for a knight of olden times? I belong to the present day, and I am not ashamed of it. There are things that I would not do for all the treasures of the earth: but it is not forbidden to take advantage of news one has not obtained in any underhand way, any more than it is forbidden to play cards with greenhorns when one happens to know more than they do."

Savinien said nothing, but he noted his cousin's opinion, which coincided with that of M. Montauron as to the honesty of a gentleman in profiting by a speculation on 'Change. M. de Laffemas went so far as to declare that it was quite fair to use private information from government sources.

"I leave you to the care of Providence, so to speak, my dear cousin," added the marquis; "for having thus given you the benefit of my private and personal views, I must leave you. Pontaumur is waiting for me at the club to have his revenge at bézique, and I want to win a few points before dinner so as to teach him not to vote against my friend. I will get you another backer while I am there. There is an election this month, and I won't let the chance slip by. I will do it all myself, as I presume you have not seen any one in our set since you came to Paris."

"No one but your mother and Madame de Loudinières."

"And they don't count, of course. But have you been introduced anywhere else?"

"I have called upon Monsieur Montauron, my uncle's banker."

"Did you see his wife?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because my mother was somewhat acquainted with her formerly. Madame Montauron is of good family, and she married beneath her. She

excusable, however, as she had not a penny. But you haven't seen any the 'irregulars' who live in such a luxurious style?"

"No, indeed; and I don't— —"

"Oh!" interrupted the marquis, "don't say that you don't intend to see them. Go, cousin; but, as I said of the Bourse, not often. Prudence best."

Having thus expressed his opinions, the marquis shook hands, English fashion, and left his young cousin in all haste.

Savinien had no desire to detain him. He was very glad to be alone to reflect upon many things, and besides, while proceeding along the boulevard, he had reached a point opposite the Café Tortoni, and wished to cross over the way to see whether Fougeray was there. He had been looking in vain for him during forty-eight hours or so. However, before crossing the boulevard, Savinien paused to reflect undisturbed. It was an hour when free and easy locomotion is an impossibility. Interminable rows of vehicles were passing along,—some going towards the Bastile, others towards the church of La Madeleine; there were victorias in which sat painted damsels, and phaetons driven by fashionable dandies, which were trying to pass one another in the middle of the street; while huge omnibuses with three horses rushed without the least ceremony between the files of private carriages, which had to turn aside to allow them to pass. The sight recalled the simile of an ironclad scattering a fleet of little boats.

Viscount d'Amaulis had a firm tread and a quick eye, but he lacked the essentially Parisian gift of profiting at once by a chance for gliding between two moving vehicles. He was in no great hurry, however, and was glad to have an opportunity of thinking a little before meeting George Fougeray. He still felt some resentment towards him, although he was bringing him a large bundle of bank-notes just given him by the broker. Savinien had followed M. Montauron's advice. Not to injure his friend, he had decided to be silent as to the part Fougeray had played in the transaction, and he had received, without a murmur, the large sum of two hundred and thirty thousand francs—with the brokerage off, which was a trifle—and the packet of notes in his pocket was large and annoying. He was very anxious to get rid of the cash; and as on the evening before, to his great astonishment and annoyance, he had been unable to find Fougeray, he had now made up his mind not to go home till he had seen him.

The conversation of his cousin Adhémar, a relative who was converted to Parisian ideas, had not changed his opinion as to George's conduct, but it had troubled him.

"They are all the same," he said to himself, sadly. "The Golden Pig! The Golden Pig of my dream! I thought that George was shameless in burning incense before it. He came here without a copper, and wanted at all risks to make money. He was in the wrong, no doubt, but he hadn't a farthing; he didn't belong to an old family, and his poverty excuses him to a certain extent. But here is a true nobleman of undeniably good stock and title, who is rich, and will some day be still richer, as he is the son, and the only one, of a marchioness, with an income of eighty thousand francs a year; still he thinks of nothing but money, talks of nothing but money, and has the same ideas as to obtaining it as my companion at the Rennes law-school. He approves of people who profit by unpublished news; he boasts of betting on certainties at races; he

declares that Madame Montauron did well in marrying M. Montauron, because he was a millionaire and she had no dowry; he advises me to turn my title of viscount into money by a rich marriage; and when he mentioned my cousin Yvonne, it was to find out what her fortune amounted to. What, then, is this Paris, where the best people are infected with a golden plague, which turns their heads and withers their hearts?"

Having relieved his mind by this speech, which he had not, however, the bad taste to deliver out loud, the simple-minded native of Brittany asked himself whether, in the provinces, there was not more uprightness than in Paris. There people do not juggle with millions as in Paris, but they seek them with undying tenacity. To save is the first and only thought. Fortunes and dowries are more thought of and more closely calculated in the country than anywhere else; and gold alone, lord of the world, is the unfailing theme of every tongue.

"My uncle doesn't talk of money incessantly, but he sometimes does," muttered Savinien. "My aunt has a mania for calculating the profit on every farm within six leagues of us. There is only dear Yvonne who never thinks or speaks of money."

The recollection of his cousin gave rise to other thoughts. Savinien had reached a moment when it was necessary for him to decide what life he would lead during his stay in town. He had not yet made up his mind, and did not yet know how to determine upon his course. Arriving with no end of good intentions, he had suddenly discovered the most dazzling temptations in the near future; fashionable life, clubs, horses, and all that Paris gives for gold. It was another "Temptation of Saint Anthony" revised, corrected, and considerably added to. Savinien d'Amaulis was no saint. He remained firm, however; he swore to resist the tempters who assailed him, and to fly from danger as soon as possible. He would willingly have returned to Plouër, even though he might be obliged to confess to his uncle Trémorin that no young man could hold out when he was but twenty-four years old against six whole months of temptation.

However, fatality had thrown in his way a still unfinished affair. Bound by chains which it did not depend upon him to sever, Savinien could not depart before having fulfilled his mission as a protector. Besides, M. de Trémorin, who had long known Madame Montauron, would have advised his nephew to remain upon the defensive in her behalf, and the poor woman greatly needed his help. He had that casket, that fatal casket from which, like the box of Pandora, all sorts of evil might emerge.

How could he restore it to the woman from whom he had received it? It was necessary to wait till she afforded him some safe opportunity for placing it in her hands unseen. She had promised to do so, but not until the following Friday evening.

What could he do in the meantime? He need only go to the Provincial Bank, and, seen by none but an office clerk, who would feel no interest in the matter, open compartment No. 919 and take out the terrible casket. But, in the first place, he did not wish to keep it by him, having only his trunk or a wardrobe in which he could place it. Besides, he had seen that M. Montauron had listened attentively to the talkative Bouret, and that his face had clouded when that merciless gossip had amused himself by describing the casket deposited by M. d'Amaulis, and proclaiming the number of the compartment hired by this new subscriber. It was evident that the description had reminded the husband of some familiar

ct, one belonging to his wife no doubt, and that his suspicions were n aroused.

t was yet to be seen whether Montauron was not the kind of man to e himself warned whenever Viscount d'Amaulis presented himself at the lt. Montauron had not the power or the actual possibility of violating privacy of a deposit in the banking-house of which he was the l, but still he was the master of the situation. There was nothing to ent him from instructing his clerks to detain the depositor of No. 919 never he made his appearance to take back the casket, and to keep until he, Montauron, summoned by the telephone, could come in as chance so as to see the deposit withdrawn.

The banker was well enough acquainted with M. d'Amaulis to make it emely awkward for the latter to refuse to allow him to go down to the lts with him, and his presence would necessarily greatly perplex inien. So there was a great risk ahead, and the viscount could not upon himself to rush forward to meet it without previously consulting lame Montauron as to the best moment for the perilous attempt.

He had arrived at the point of even feeling curious to know what there ld be in the casket to cause the banker's wife such agony of mind.

Letters? That was the first thought that had occurred to him. But was the casket so heavy if it only contained a lot of letters, love sives perhaps? Gold or precious stones? In that case Madame Mon- on would appear to have defrauded her husband, so to speak, for the e of that foreigner covered with furs who left his hotel at such an arthly hour, and who, instead of taking the train, went to deposit his rmous chest at the Provincial Bank.

Savinien dismissed this last idea. A well-born woman, a woman om M. de Tremorin had known when a girl, and in whom he was still erested, might perhaps have a lover, but surely not one whom she gave ney to. Savinien had not had time to inform Madame Montauron y respecting his last meeting with Count Aparanda, but he relied n doing so when he could speak freely with her, and he thought it ikely that she would withhold from him the secret of the contents of mysterious casket. Since their short interview in the conservatory had made no sign; but M. Montauron had, on the following day, tten a very friendly note to remind Savinien that the rooms in the Rembrandt were at his disposal. His persistence on this point had eed seemed strange to Yvonne's cousin.

The latter had proceeded thus far in his thoughts, when from the side- k, where he stood awaiting an opportunity to cross the boulevard, caught sight of George Fougeray standing upon the top step of the rance of the Café Tortoni: George himself, with a cigar between his , a stick in his hand, and his hat pushed back. He appeared to be on point of going off, and Savinien, who feared he might miss him, darted ween the vehicles crowding the roadway. As he did so he pressed his d upon the pocket-book containing the precious notes which Fougeray, einthal and Galipot had, so to speak, thrust upon him

Although not yet as agile as a Parisian, Savinien d'Amaulis crossed boulevard without any accident from the crowd of vehicles, and ched the opposite side of the way just as George Fougeray was coming vn the steps of the legendary café, which every gay liver of the century entered, for Tortoni's establishment was opened under the Consulate. George raised his arms as he perceived his friend, described a circle

in the air with his cane, and hastened towards him. "There you are at last?" he exclaimed, taking his arm.

"At last?" cried Savinien, "I have been looking for you for two days."

"And without finding me, that is true."

"I have been four times to see you."

"I took care not to come across you."

"You kept out of my way? Will you oblige me by telling me why?"

"My dear boy, you uttered such heresies at the Bourse on the day before yesterday, and expressed such absurd sentiments, that I renounced your conversion for the time being. I left you to join the worthy Galipot, you will remember."

"I saw that, but that does not explain why——"

"Learn," interrupted George, "that I make it a principle never to wrestle with the ridiculous notions which my friends may take into their heads. I rather give them time for reflection. You had an attack of countrified squeamishness, and you were preaching a sermon: 'I speculate with shares! Oh, no! A gentleman of Brittany sells his oxen and his oats, but he scorns to dabble in stock!' and so on. So I thought that I would allow time for your virtue to simmer down, and I fled from you."

"If you will let me speak, I——"

"I thought, you see, that you might go on like that for forty-eight hours. To-morrow morning would have been about the time to meet you, and I was sure that the worst would be over. Besides, I knew that the payment would be made to-day, and I did not wish to see you till after it was made."

"You have a pretty opinion of me, it seems, since you expected I should go after the money."

"I think that you have too much common sense to refuse Fortune when you have only to extend your hand to grasp her, and, if I am not wrong, you received the money."

"What do you know about it?" said Savinien, in vexation.

"My dear fellow, I know the bearing of a man who has just received a big packet of notes. Take away your hand which you are holding to your heart like a lover in a play, unbutton your overcoat and let me see the portfolio that makes your pocket bulge out. You have just left the broker's office, that is easy to see."

"Well, yes, I have."

"Excellent! I knew that you would go. It would have been too bad not to do so, and I know that you are no fool."

"Oh, I received this money simply because it was proved to me that I could not do otherwise.

"Who proved that?"

"Monsieur Montauron."

"You consulted him to quiet your conscience! That is too much!" exclaimed George, with a burst of laughter. "Montauron as a casuist; that is capital, upon my honour!"

"I told him the situation in which you had placed me in spite of myself."

"What! you told him that I had used your name to speculate? You need not have done that, I must say!".

"You forced me to do so. I received a letter from a broker which I did not understand. I showed it to him in order to have an explanation."

"Oh, simplicity! If I had thought you so ignorant, I would have

ven you a lesson. I did attempt it, but you would not listen to me. ell! you know all about it now, and you could not have found any tter teacher than Montauron. He knows all the tricks of the trade. me! what did he say?"

"He explained to me, in the first place, that, thanks to divers nœuvres, which I did not attempt to comprehend, I had made an mense sum—two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs."

"With the brokerage off, that is correct."

"I objected, I beg you to believe it, and as I did not wish that he ould think that I had risked losing without the means of paying, I told m what had taken place. I told him that you had not asked my per- ission when you speculated in my name, and that——"

"I will wager that he did not rave against me."

"He said that, unfortunately, these things were done by your ssociates."

"There! I was sure of it."

"Yes, but it does not follow that he approves of them."

"It appears, however, that he advised you to accept payment," sneered eorge.

"Yes, so as not to place you in a very bad position."

"The fact is, that the hundred thousand which are my share, are much tter adapted to my pocket than to the broker's cash box. They come st in time, and I should have been greatly annoyed not to have received em."

"That isn't the question. I wished to go to the broker and tell him at he was mistaken, or that he had been deceived—that my ignorance ad been taken advantage of, and that the sum belonged to the person ho had carried on the operation in my name, which I had not authorised im to use."

"*Him*, that's myself, George Fougeray. That was a nice idea! And so Iontauron kept you from carrying it out?"

"He said that it would injure you in the minds of people on 'Change.'"

"Greatly, that is true. It would have sufficed to stop my credit, that to say, to ruin me. What harm have I done you, my friend? What o you wish to beggar me for?"

"I did not understand what would be the consequences of my eclaration."

"Thanks to Montauron, however, you now comprehend. The lynx as his good traits, it appears. Tell me exactly what he bade you do."

"He told me to say nothing, to receive the money, to hand it all to you, nd to tell you at the same time not to do the same thing again."

"I have no doubt that he told you to be quiet and to receive the money. Iontauron has plenty of common sense and understands business. But ie rest is your own invention, my dear friend. I recognise your hivalrous style."

"Whether the idea be mine, or suggested to me, does not matter. I m resolved to carry it out, and without delay. You must, therefore, take hese notes, which I do not care to carry about with me any longer."

"Here! on the boulevard, before dozens of people who know me! You on't see that all the fellows taking their absinthe in front of Tortoni's re looking at us? Among them there are several Bourse men, who would mmediately guess that you were handing me the profits of the settlement. hey know that it is pay-day at the agents' offices, and that I have no

account with them. Seeing you hand me bundles of notes of ten thousand francs each, they would fan the flame, and when it spread, woe be unto us!"

"To you, perhaps."

"And to you, for they would say that you were my man of straw."

Savinien started, and almost became angry. But he realised that George was in the right, and that the place was ill-chosen to settle their accounts.

"So be it," said he, "let us go to your place, or come to my lodgings near by, but, at all events, let us end the matter."

"Well! well! there is no hurry," s id George, who was firmly resolved to accept his share only, and wished to gain time. He relied on Savinien abandoning his lofty view of the matter before the cock crowed thrice, and to bring this about, had a plan of his own. "Oblige me by accompanying me first of all to a sale at the auction rooms in the Rue Drouot," said he. "I have some purchases to make there, and will show you some *curios*, and, besides, I have something new to tell you."

"Thanks," replied Savinien. "I prefer to return to my hotel, where I rely upon your calling in an hour's time to rid me of this money."

"Are you seriously offended with me?"

"I am greatly annoyed at what you have done."

"Does that mean that you no longer consider me your friend?" asked George, with sincere feeling, which touched Savinien.

"Well!" cried Yvonne's cousin, "I am ready to believe that you did not understand the seriousness of your act, and that you won't do such a thing again."

"Oh, no! that I promise you. I acted with a good intention; I was pleased to associate my favourite friend with a stroke of good luck that dropped from the skies. I did wrong, and I hope that you will overlook it, for I would rather lose all I have and live on fifty francs a month, as I did at Rennes, than that you should be at variance with me."

Savinien's anger did not hold out against such sincere language as this. He liked George very much, and would have regretted breaking with him, so he shook his hand and accompanied him towards the Rue Drouot.

"Let us talk of something else," said Fougeray. "I have a surprise in store for you, but I wish to keep it back for a while, and save my 'grand effect' till the end. Learn that yesterday we received at the club to which I belong two new members, both of them noblemen. The first is a Swede, whose name has an Italian termination. He is called Count Aparanda."

"Count Aparanda!" exclaimed Savinien, starting so suddenly that George stopped short and stared at him.

"What's up now?" cried he. "It wasn't that name that I meant to surprise you with. I had arranged my scenes to produce an admirable effect, and I had another name in reserve as my final tableau, as it were, and now you leap five feet into the air as soon as I mention the first one. What ails you? Why are you astonished that a Scandinavian gentleman should honour the Plungers' Club with his presence? Does your jerking about arise from the fact that his name ends in *a*? That happens every day in this country. As a proof of it, there's the 'Vie Parisienne' being played now at the Variétés Theatre—Offenbach's music, you know, with Metella's song:

> "Recall to your mind if you can,
> That generous and great nobleman,
> Jean Stanislas, Baron Frascata.'

r, this Frascata is a Swede in the play, so why shouldn't our Count randa be a Swede as well? I bring forward the most reliable authors, see."

'It isn't that, but——"

'But what? Do you know this northern lord?"

'No; but I have heard of him."

'That doesn't surprise me. He formerly lived in Paris, it appears, has not been forgotten there, although he had been absent for ten s. Tell me, however, what did you hear about him?"

'Nothing," answered Savinien, at a loss what to reply.

'Then what does it matter to you if he has joined the club? I give my word of honour that I think you must be in love, for you no longer to know what you are saying."

'You talk at random yourself. I may have some special reason for g curious about this foreigner, and yet I may wish to keep the matter nyself."

'Good! There's a woman in the case—you may as well confess it."

'I confess nothing. Believe what you please, but tell me all that you w about Count Aparanda."

'I ask no better, but I know very little. It is said that he is very rich vning pine forests and iron mines in his own country. I am not a ever in fortunes of that kind, but whether he be a millionaire or a ar is nothing to me. It is said, besides, that he formerly made a great y conquests among the fair sex, and he is still looked upon as a hand- e sentimentalist."

'Handsome! Is he handsome?"

'Bah! He was pointed out to me last evening on the boulevard, and n obliged to confess that his face is not wanting in character; but I k that he has a certain bearishness about him. He has a beard like a ber's."

'That is the man," thought Savinien.

'You will soon have an opportunity of judging of his moral and physical ibutes."

'How? Where?"

'I now reach the 'grand effect.' The surprise, the real one! I told that we had voted for two gentlemen. The first was Count Aparanda, other—can't you guess?"

'No, indeed."

'The other was yourself."

'That is too much! Did I ask you to propose me? You have a per- mania for bringing me into things without consulting me."

'I had no need to consult you, I was sure that you would pt."

'You were mistaken. I do not wish to belong to any club."

'*Any* club; of course not, but the Plungers' Club, that is another ter. Everybody would like to belong to that."

'Everybody except myself."

'What can you say against the club? It is composed of very agreeable ple, the dinners are capital, and there is a good game every night. Is ne name that alarms you? I'll bet that you do not know its meaning."

'Oh, I don't care to know it."

'Oh! it isn't a mystery. You see it applies to those unlucky card- rers who plunge too deep."

"A pretty notion, and such a name is really calculated to tempt me! If I wanted to belong to a club it wouldn't be to that one."

"Why shouldn't you belong to a club?"

"Because card-playing goes on at all of them, and I have no money to lose."

"You would win. I watched you at baccarat the other evening, and you had the devil's own luck. But you are not obliged to play against you own inclination."

"What should I do there, then?"

"Make agreeable acquaintances. We are a jolly party and have no end of fun. You will belong to us and I'll answer for it that you will enjoy yourself."

"As I did on the first evening I spent here? Thank you, I am not rich enough for that. Just now, my cousin Adhémar de Laffemas proposed to have me admitted at his club—the 'Jockey.'"

"If you refused you made a mistake. It would give you a social position at once."

"I neither accepted nor refused."

'Then you will be admitted; but that need not prevent you from belonging to the 'Plungers.' It is very fashionable to belong to several clubs."

"Very fashionable and very expensive."

"Do you count the pleasure of our meeting every day for nothing? You can't imagine how difficult it is in Paris for friends to meet when there is not a regular place for it. I, myself, can't belong to the Jockey. If you should propose me as a member, I should be threatened with a general black-balling. But at the Plungers I am at home. If you care to see me often you will come there. Besides, you are elected, and if you refuse you will place me in a ridiculous position."

"So much the worse for you. You should have consulted me before proposing me. You want to force me in against my will."

"How could I imagine that you would refuse. And under pretext of economy, too! Innocent being that you are, let me tell you that you will get a dinner there for five francs that would cost you forty anywhere else."

"I will dine for six somewhere else, then."

"I defy you to do so unless you wish to dine like a coal-heaver. Come now, Savinien, I have told my friends that you would come this evening? You are down for the best table."

"The deuce take the best table."

"Don't put such an affront upon me as to force me to dine there without you. It will be thought that I am some Gascon who has been boasting that he has a viscount among his acquaintance, while the viscount turns up his nose at him. If you don't join the club I shall send in my resignation."

"You would, perhaps, be doing a good thing."

"You would not regret, then, depriving me of a pleasure to which I attach great importance, and upsetting all my daily plans?" The obstinate native of Brittany did not reply, and Fougeray as a final argument exclaimed: "Do you wish to lose the chance of seeing and thoroughly investigating the affairs of Count Aparanda?"

"Count Aparanda!" repeated Savinien, who, stunned by this flood of words, had forgotten the fur-clad individual.

"Yes. He is coming to dine with us. I shall take good care to place

an between you and me at table. That will seem quite natural, as you ere both elected on the same occasion. You must become acquainted, nd since this man interests you, you can converse with him as long as ou like."

This time George succeeded. Savinien remembered the part played by he Swede in the mysterious adventure of Madame Montauron, and he aid to himself that he would no doubt be doing an immense service to he banker's imprudent wife if he could give her some information as to he life led by the traveller who had left No. 26. The Plungers' Club resented no seductions to him, but he reflected that he would not be bliged to go there again after once appearing. He would be at liberty fter paying his subscription, which his previous winnings at cards nabled him to settle without inconvenience.

"If I were sure that Count Aparanda would dine there to-day," he uttered, "I might, perhaps, do the same."

"I give you my word of honour I saw his name inscribed next to ours on the dining-list. Come! it's agreed, and so that you shan't have chance of changing your mind I shall not leave you. I shall take you rst to the auction rooms. Here we are."

Their lively conversation had, indeed, lasted until they had reached the ue Drouot.

"What takes you to the auction rooms?" asked the viscount.

"I am going to buy some furniture. Since my hit on 'Change I have fancy for my second floor rooms in the Rue d'Antin. I have taken a etter suite in the Rue Scribe. Come with me, you will find some pretty bject of art to give as a present to your cousin."

Savinien said nothing, but followed George, who led him along the Rue rouot.

Savinien had no curiosity about the auction sale, and knew that his ear Yvonne would prefer a mere flower plucked for her by him to all the bjects of art in the world. But he reflected on the possibility of meeting ount Aparanda that evening, and now that he had made up his mind to main with his friend until dinner time, he thought it as well to while way the afternoon in a saleroom as in the street.

"I shall have a better chance to reflect," thought he. "While George busy buying furniture during the auction, he will leave me in peace. I ally need it, for my head whirls. It would seem to be my destiny to do e opposite of what I wish. I almost refused my cousin Laffemas' offer propose me at the Jockey, and now I find myself a member of the lungers' Club, without having requested that honour, just as the other ay I won on 'Change without wishing it, and just as I find myself, gainst my will, mixed up in Madame Montauron's intrigues. But there one thing that I won't do: I won't use any of the money in my pocket r myself. George may talk as long as he likes, but he shall rid me of it efore dinner, or we shall quarrel. If he refuses to take it, I will send it him in a registered letter."

While holding this converse with himself, Savinien still felt his de-pocket, and George said to him, laughing: "Seal up your coat her-etically, my dear boy! I am about to take you to a place where all nds of people resort, and there are some to whom I would not trust my rse."

"Then let me go to my house to wait for you," said Savinien, eagerly.

"Pshaw! I am joking. I have often gone into this place with

thousands about me, and no one has touched me. It is only fools who are robbed. Pickpockets single them out by their faces. Fortunately you don't look any more countrified than I do."

"Never mind, I should much prefer your taking the money. It is very much in my way."

"It would be much more in mine. I shall make offers for the furniture I may fancy, and in the heat of bidding I might forget that I had a lot of money in my pocket: but you, a mere spectator of the wrangle, will have all your wits about you. What a child you are! Why do you trouble yourself?"

Viscount d'Amaulis' self-love prevented his objecting any further, after these compliments, but he promised himself that he would not take his hand off his treasure.

They had reached the corner of the by-no-means majestic building, which was erected some thirty years ago to take the place of the old Hôtel Bullion, and which the Parisians of bygone days persisted in calling Hôtel Bullion still. The front of the edifice was covered with bills of every colour. Sales of a rich and handsome set of furniture; a sale of diamonds, trinkets, silver, and lace belonging to Mademoiselle X——, the dramatic artist: a sale of a very fine collection of old paintings belonging to the deceased Van S——, a celebrated connoisseur of Bruges; sales of Rouen *faience* and Italian majolica; sales of Persian arms and Japanese bronzes—nothing was wanting in the announcements posted up, all who had a mania for artistic furniture or *curios* only had to enter the place to find something to their individual taste, and the most modest citizen looking for a second-hand set of goods and chattels might have done the same.

George Fougeray, who thought himself called upon to appear at all of the interesting art sales, and most especially at the one announced very pompously by a fashionable damsel, was well acquainted with the manner in which matters went on at the so-called Hôtel des Ventes. They reached the entrance in the Rue Drouot, and as George pushed open one of the swinging-doors, he motioned to Savenien to pass in first. "Go before me all the time," said he, "and if any suspicious face is seen near by, I will warn you."

Spring is the season for great sales. Just when the lilac-bushes flower, many persons experience a desire to get rid of their furniture. It would be difficult to say why they choose this time rather than any other to sell or buy, but such is the case. The place was full of people, and it was the hour of the afternoon when bidding is usually at its height. The best lots are invariably kept till the last—that is, until the Bourse has closed and wealthy speculators have had time to reach the rooms.

The arched hall resounded with the voices of the criers, emphasised by the hammers of the auctioneers. The stairs and the entrances of the rooms were thronged with people, a motley crowd, in which elegantly dressed women stood side by side with second-hand dealers in shabby coats.

On the ground floor are the rooms for current sales—narrow and badly lighted, and full of a low set of customers. Here hang the clothes, and here are displayed the goods of such unfortunate persons as have not succeeded in paying their rents.

Savinien, who had never entered the place before, thought that his friend wished to go in this direction, so he walked on without being told of his mistake by George. Approaching an open door, he suddenly

beheld a curious spectacle. A sale of cast-off objects of all kinds was taking place—mattresses, saucepans, worn-out muffs, hideous clocks, French cashmeres, and musical instruments. An auctioneer, with a secretary beside him, announced the objects in due order, with a weary air, and the crier made the wildest efforts to effect a sale. Women who sold second-hand clothes were handling shawls and dresses; others who sold second-hand furniture were feeling the mattresses; and peasants from Auvergne were turning over saucepans.

"What!" exclaimed the viscount, turning round to George, "do you really intend buying your bedding and kitchen furniture here?"

"No," replied Fougeray, much amused by Savinien's consternation. "I thought that you were probably thinking of furnishing an establishment for yourself, and I let you go in. You are always talking about economy, and in this part of the building you will be able to find all you want to begin housekeeping with at a low price. But come upstairs, my dear boy, and you will see what a real sale is, and what furniture I have my eye on for my rooms in the Rue Scribe."

With this he took the viscount's arm to lead him up the stairs to the first floor. "Do you know," said he, "that it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to buy some furniture too. You will remain here six months, and it would be very tiresome for you to stay all the while at a hotel. You could not receive anybody; no stylish women would call where you are."

Savinien need only have said a word to undeceive him, but he neither cared nor wished to tell him of his adventure with Madame Montauron. "In the first place," said he, laughing, "I don't expect any calls from ladies. And, besides," he added, "you talk of impossibilities; a set of furniture for a bachelor's apartment would cost me five or six thousand francs."

"You had better say ten or twelve."

"Well! where should I find that amount? You Parisians have a strange way of talking. Want of money is no obstacle to you. Why even Monsieur Montauron insists upon letting me a flat in a house of his in the Rue Rembrandt."

"You really mean it? Didn't you accept?"

"No, indeed!"

"You were wrong. Six months' rent there would be less than your room and parlour at twelve francs a day in a hotel, and you would, besides, have the pleasure of being near Monsieur Montauron and his wife."

"You may be right; but what should I do without any furniture? Do you expect me to sleep on the floor?"

"Let us say no more, then, you obstinate native of Brittany," responded George Fougeray.

He said no more, but he reflected. He had a plan, which he took care not to allow his friend to guess, but which he resolved to carry out at once. Sales were going on in two rooms on the first floor. The first one was full, but not with the same class of customers as had been seen below. There were few women, but a number of shabby old men who were passing pictures from one to another. Here and there a well-dressed man was perceivable, some lover of art who had come to buy a picture, and was waiting till it was laid on the table.

"Do you hear?" said George Fougeray, in a jeering tone. "The crier is putting up a portrait attributed to Vandyke for six francs. That is really very cheap. Let us look at it."

And with this he urged on his friend Savinien, who would certainly have resisted, if, on glancing towards the enclosure reserved for the auctioneer, the crier, and special purchasers, he had not caught sight of a man who fixed his attention at once. He seemed to be the depositor whom Amaulis had already met in the vaults of the Provincial Bank. He was standing near the desk at which the auctioneer was seated, and he looked disdainfully at the swarm of unimportant purchasers who were crowding about the long table, upon which the crier was displaying the picture attributed to Vandyke.

The man in question did not wear any furs, like the traveller whom Savinien had seen leaving the hotel, but he had a black beard, sunken eyes, and a nose like a falcon's beak—indeed, exactly like that of the Swedish nobleman. Savinien still had some doubts, however, the change of dress causing his hesitation. But George suddenly exclaimed:

"There! Do you see? There's Count Aparanda, the man who will be beside you at table at the club dinner to-night."

"What! Is that he?"

"Himself. I never saw him but once, but it would not be easy to mistake him. I didn't expect to meet him this afternoon, but there is really nothing surprising in his being here. He has just come to Paris, and wishes to make his rooms presentable. It is quite natural that he should buy some pictures. If he runs up the Vandyke, however, he will be taken in, poor Scandinavian! It is worth exactly twelve francs, frame included."

"It is true, then, that he is going to stay in France?" murmured Savinien.

"So it is said. What does it matter to you?"

"Nothing at all, but I thought——"

"What?"

The viscount did not reply. He perceived that he had said too much already.

"You are decidedly much more interested in this man, my dear boy, than you admit," remarked Fougeray.

"I don't know him. I told you so before."

"Well, you will become acquainted with each other this evening. His backers assured me that he was very agreeable and very rich, which does no harm. He speaks French as though he had been born in the Rue Vivienne, and proposes giving entertainments, to which he will invite all Paris. It appears that he has brought an immense amount of money from Sweden."

Savinien was lost in thought.

"I know where that enormous sum is placed," said he to himself. "It lies in the chest in the vaults of the Provincial Bank."

"There, now!" said George, "the Vandyke is sold for twenty-two francs. What a loss for the Louvre Museum! Now they are taking down two huge canvasses depicting hunting scenes—more or less authentic Snyders—very decorative for a dining-room. I imagine that the Swede is going to make himself a present of them—we shall see them closer when he gives his dinners, and he will give some, and invite us to them, my friend, I rely on that."

"You may go if it amuses you. As for me, I shall not."

"What a barbarian you are! As soon as one talks of enjoyment you bristle up like a hedgehog. You will get over it, however, later on."

"I don't think that I shall. I hope we are not going to stay here for ever. You didn't intend buying any pictures, did you?"

"No. I have no intention of forming a gallery, and when my means will admit of my having one, I shan't go in for the 'old masters.' There are too many sham Dutch paintings and false Titians. There are many excellent things to be had, however, in modern pictures, and buying them is a good investment. Corot's pictures which could be bought at a hundred louis, ten years ago, are now sold easily for twenty thousand francs a piece."

"Do you only care for pictures for what they bring?" asked Savinien, shrugging his shoulders.

"I like to invest my money to good advantage, if you please. But I am losing my time, and Jeannine's furniture must be almost sold. You have seen enough of Count Aparanda, have you not?"

"Too much."

"Then let us pass on to the next room. I don't wish to miss the Louis XIII. bed, the Louis XIV. arm-chairs, and the Louis XVI. clock."

"All the reigns, as it were. Who is Jeannine—a furniture-dealer?"

"No, she is a young actress who was greatly in fashion before the last war, and who has lost everything after many ups and downs. Her ninth set of furniture is going to-day, and as she had some very handsome things, I wish to profit by the opportunity to buy a few of them."

Savinien followed George into an immense room which they could scarcely enter, so great was the crowd there. However, all the people there had not come for the purpose of buying. There were several poor devils perched upon some steps where it cost nothing to sit, and some female friends of Jeannine who had put in an appearance less to see than to be seen.

Still, serious purchasers were not wanting. The sale had been well advertised for a month past, and had brought together a number of dealers and connoisseurs of artistic objects. It had only just begun and would last two days. Curtains and carpets were hung up round the walls of the room; chairs of carved walnut, buffets of old oak, and Renaissance cabinets piled up, one upon another, formed impassable barricades. Savinien asked himself whether in a two days' sale all this quantity of stylish furniture could find purchasers. He soon found out, however, that auctions proceed very rapidly. The objects to be sold were, in turn, carefully displayed on the table, at which sat numerous dealers who had an understanding between themselves. Dresses and bedding were now being sold. Everything had been valued beforehand, and as each dealer took care not to oppose his fellows, each lot was bid for but once. Bad luck would have befallen any outsider who attempted to buy. The black band would at once have coalesced to make the purchase run up to two or three times its value.

"Good," muttered George, who took in the situation at a glance, "they haven't come to the important knocking-down yet. I am in time."

"How will you bid in the midst of this din?" asked Savinien, who began to be interested in the singular sight.

"Don't be alarmed, we shan't stay where we are. I am known here, and the private doors open for me. Do you see over there a reserved corner beside the desk at which the auctioneer sits?"

"Yes, but it is as much crowded as the rest of the room, that reserved corner of yours.'

"Oh, no! room will be made for us. It is full of acquaintances of mine. Come with me. We have only to pass along the corridor."

Savinien complied, and when they were out of the room, George said to him: "It is a great pity that you decided not to take the rooms which Montauron offered you. You would find furniture here to-day at a bargain."

"You must be joking. I wouldn't spend my money at this woman's sale. I don't want canopied beds and Gobelin tapestry."

"I know people much poorer than you are, who don't deprive themselves of things as useless. But you have not seen all. Jeannine had any amount of room in her house, and did things on a great scale, when she was rich, as she always aimed at originality. She lived in the Rue Joufroy, near the Avenue de Villiers, in the same style as if she had been in a château. I saw yesterday, at the exhibition in this room, a wonderfully handsome set of furniture for a bachelor's apartment, which will not sell very high, I'll venture to say. It is too artistic to please plain people, and it would be exactly what you require."

"Thank you. Why don't you buy it for yourself if it is such a bargain?"

"I don't require it. My present first floor is full, and in my new apartments I have but one room more. But you need furniture for a bedroom, a dressing room, a smoking gallery, and a dining room. All that is here, and in perfect taste; but you can't see the furniture now, owing to all the tables and lounges which are piled up. However, I will show you the choice articles presently, and I am sure you will like them."

"I have no doubt of it; but I repeat that I am not in a position to meet foolish expenses."

"It wouldn't be foolish, and you will regret it if you miss the chance."

"Good morning, my children," said a merry ringing feminine voice behind the two friends. "You've come to get a last reminder of poor Jeannine, haven't you; the least little trifle in the world, an English washing-basin, or a rice-powder box?"

"What! Anita!" exclaimed George, turning towards her. "It is heaven that sends you."

"No, it was Mariette Charlier, who wants to buy a pair of old Dresden candlesticks, and asked me to come in her place, as she has the headache. I say, viscount, it isn't very polite on your part not to bid me good morning," she resumed, addressing Savinien. "Come, one little smile, or I shall be angry!"

"Savinien will give you a dozen smiles, each of them more amiable than its fellows," said George, "but I wish to speak to you alone a moment. I have a service to ask of you, divine madcap."

"Come! come!" replied the pretty actress, who had formed one of the party with which Savinien d'Amaulis had supped on the evening of his arrival in Paris. She now stepped back, pulling George after her.

Savinien did not know which way to look during the "aside" between George Fougeray and this girl, who had burst in upon their conversation without caring whether she disturbed them or not.

She was really very pretty; she was even beautiful, and her style of beauty was individual in its character. She was a black-eyed blonde, a blonde with light brown hair which, when let down, covered her like a cloak. Her skin was of admirable whiteness and delicacy. Her lips, somewhat too full, were flexible, and readily displayed her teeth, which, without flattery, might have been compared to double rows of pearls.

She had been born in a circus on the Place du Trône, on the opening day of the great gingerbread fair. Brought up among strolling players and acrobats, she had first tried the boards in the provinces, and of late times she had obtained an engagement at the "Variétés" in Paris, soon acquiring great notoriety. A real flower of the woods, she had soon become accustomed to the temperature of the Parisian hot-house. She knew all the Parisians who are acquainted with women of her profession, and the fine gentlemen who would not have looked at her when she was dragging herself with her boots in holes along the Boulevard Saint-Michel, now felt highly honoured when invited to dine or dance at her house. For when Anita was not on the stage she received and gave balls. The hot-house to which she had been transplanted was a handsome mansion, with a court-yard and garden, on the Boulevard Malesherbes, and it belonged to her and was unmortgaged. In spite of her possessions, however, she had remained good-natured and independent. There was a kind of Bohemianism about her which did not do her any harm in the eyes of her admirers. She amused herself with the young, and pleased the old on account of her independent spirit. George Fougeray, who knew life, prophesied that she would end as she had begun, in poverty. She had a mania for sudden fancies like many women who unexpectedly attain to fortune.

Savinien did justice to all her charms, greatly admiring her peculiar beauty, laughing at her whimsical talk, and even making no objection as to the conspicuous oddity of her dress. He liked her because she was not commonplace, but she frightened him; he was almost afraid of her. She seemed to him like a young panther, with its claws drawn in, and gambolling about upon a carpet for its master's amusement, until it has an opportunity to fly at his throat and strangle him.

The supper, which she had enlivened by her presence, had charmed the viscount on the day of his arrival from Brittany, but he did not wish to see her again, and already regretted having come to the Hôtel des Ventes, as he now encountered her there. It was not without some anxiety that he tried to conjecture what George Fougeray could have to say so privately to this princess of the footlights.

Their talk did not last long. After three minutes' chat in a low tone, interspersed with frequent bursts of smothered laughter, Anita finally said: "All right, Fougeray. I didn't know this species; it will amuse me, and give me good practice."

"What are they talking about, and what have they agreed upon?" thought Savinien, who was quite puzzled.

"My little viscount," said the black-eyed blonde, "you are not polite. You promised to call on me, but I think I should have had to wait a long time for you if I had not met you here, and had a chance of telling you my mind. Fougeray promised to bring you; but he is a trickster, and, besides, when I want to have a thing done, I do it myself. Now, I want to show you my house, and I declare to you that if you do not come to see it in the course of the next twenty-four hours, I shall be your implacable enemy."

Savinien began trying to find a polite excuse, but Fougeray did not give him time to articulate it. "Anita, my girl," said he, "this is not the time for fine phrases; while you are making soft speeches to a gentleman who is by no means a bear, the Louis XVI. clock, which I have taken a fancy to, is perhaps being sold."

"Or the old Dresden candlesticks that Mariette asked me to buy for her," exclaimed the girl. "Let us go in at once, my children. Come, Fougeray, what are you waiting for? Knock at the door"

Fougeray knocked, and a clerk opened the portal. In order to be admitted by this side entrance, it was necessary to take the proper measures; but George and Anita were in the habit of coming to sales at this place, and the clerk knew them. He let them in, as well as the Viscount d'Amaulis, and they all found themselves in an apartment which communicated by an open door with the sale room, and in which the furniture already sold was piled up ready to be carted away by attendants, and duly ticketed with the names of the purchasers.

Anita, who entered the first, did not remain there, and when she appeared on the threshold of the auction-room before the public there assembled, her entrance created some sensation. She nodded in response to the bows of some gentlemen who knew her; the auctioneer smiled in his most affable manner, and the crier brought forward a chair. It was easy to see that she was quite at home.

George went to whisper a word to the auctioneer, and Savinien took up a position behind the chair occupied by the fair Anita. He would have been only too glad to get away. All these people staring at him embarrassed him greatly, and he was ashamed to be thought the attendant escort of his neighbour Anita.

The imprudent viscount was not yet at the end of his annoyances. Anita turned round to him, pulled his sleeve, and when he had, perforce, bent his head to listen to her, she said in a low voice: "Will you do me a little service?" Then, seeing that he reddened, she added: "Oh, it is nothing very difficult. You need only repeat, with your eyes on the auctioneer, the nods that I will give you."

"I don't understand what you mean," stammered Savinien.

"This is it, my dear fellow. I want to buy a set of furniture which is about to be sold; it is for one of my friends who isn't in Paris just now, and I don't wish to be seen bidding for it, in the first place, because the dealers over there would put their heads together to run it up, and besides, they know that nothing stops me when I take a notion to anything; but with you, who are not known, they won't go so far. This is why, if you will be so obliging, we will organise a private telegraph between ourselves."

"But it seems to me that George could do this much better than I could."

"Oh! Fougeray is in the same plight as myself, too well-known by the dealers. I'll bet that he will ask you to do the same thing when the Louis XVI. clock, which he wants to buy, is put up. You will save him and me a few thousand francs; besides, what more can you desire. Shan't I be looking at you in the most engaging manner for a quarter of an hour at the least."

Anita strengthened her arguments by a most languishing look, which conquered the viscount's scruples. She turned half-way round on her chair so as to face Savinien, and began looking fixedly at him like a corporal examining a soldier. Fougeray had already finished his chat with the auctioneer, and was now talking to an expert whom he was questioning, probably as to the authenticity of the famous clock.

"Gentlemen," said the auctioneer, raising his voice to command attention, "we are about to offer a complete set of furniture for a suite of four rooms, including a dining-room. It is a set suited for a bachelor. It is

unnecessary to speak of the pieces in detail, they have been seen at the show, and there has been a request made that they should be put together. If the bidding is not high enough, I will separate them; but I shall first try to sell them in one lot; the room is crowded and it is late. I now begin, gentlemen! The complete lot, a set of artistic furniture, as good as new, observe! There is a buyer at six thousand."

There came a spell of silence. The dealers were talking low together.

"Six thousand five hundred," said a deep bass voice which made Savinien start without knowing why.

The bidding started by this powerful voice came from a group in the middle of the room, and Savinien could not see who it was who offered this price.

"Say seven thousand," said the black-eyed blonde to him, without turning towards the crowd. "I know what furniture it is; it is worth double the amount."

Savinien hesitated. He thought that the pretty woman was trying to make him play the fool. But a tender, almost imploring, look induced him to make up his mind.

"Seven thousand!" said the viscount, with an effort.

George, who was not far off, smiled at him encouragingly.

"It's all right, then," said Savinien to himself. "He approves of what I am doing. He sees that I am bidding for this lady, for he knows very well that I don't wish to buy."

"Gentlemen," said the auctioneer, "we say seven thousand, and we shall not stop there."

"Now, my dear viscount," said Anita, softly, "not a word, pray. Only look at the auctioneer to repeat the signs I make to you."

"Seven thousand on my left," cried the clerk. "Let us make haste, gentlemen!"

"Seven thousand five hundred!" thundered the bass voice.

"Your turn, viscount, imitate me," muttered the lady, throwing her head back.

This vertical motion is equivalent to an assent in all civilised countries, and especially at the Paris auction rooms, where the language of signs is greatly resorted to and perfectly well understood. Viscount d'Amaulis had gone too far already to draw back, so he correctly imitated Anita's telegraphing, and the auctioneer immediately took up the bid, exclaiming: "Eight thousand! Eight thousand on the left! See, gentlemen! This figure is only half the value of the lot, the upholsterer received twenty thousand for the goods, which are quite new. Ah! eight thousand five hundred there in front of me!"

No one had spoken. The bass voice was heard no more. The other competitor had probably decided to resort to signs. Savinien did not see him, but auctioneers have lynx-like eyes, and the one directing this sale had not hesitated a second in announcing a fresh offer. When the struggle is silent, it is understood that every sign represents a bid equal to the preceding one, until it pleases one of the bidders to speak again to modify the figure more or less. While waiting for something better, the bidding for the set of bachelor's furniture went on at the rate of five hundred francs each bid.

The blonde did not seem disposed to stop at this. She continued looking at the viscount and nodding her pretty head, and the viscount repeated the gesture. The auctioneer, attentive and rapid, turned from left to

right to note each sign made by the two adversaries. And from his desk he continued crying out:

"Nine thousand!"

"Nine thousand five hundred!"

"Ten thousand!"

"Ten thousand five hundred!"

"Eleven thousand!"

At this last figure from Savinien there was a pause. The other competitor evidently reflected before pushing on. He suspected that he was bidding against a man determined to hold out, and he was afraid that he would be led too far.

"Perfect!" said Anita, in a low tone. "He will let go. If nobody else interferes you will make a good bargain."

"That is, *you* will have made one."

"Silence, and attend to the auctioneer! He knows how to handle the hammer."

"Yes; he brandishes it as though he were trying to brain some one."

"Good! he will be a minute or two now in getting ready to knock down the lot. I know his method."

Every auctioneer has a method, and there are ten different ways of handling the ebony stick, tipped with a little ivory knob. Some hold it out and shake it in a threatening way; others scarcely touch it, and wave it softly a couple of inches above the table. But whatever the method, the hammer is the sword of Damocles above the head of determined buyers. They never lose sight of it; they tremble lest it should fall on an adverse bid, and each wave of the auctioneer's hand determines them to make a fresh sacrifice.

"Eleven thousand! gentlemen," cried the auctioneer, rising to show that the end was near. "We say: eleven thousand! That isn't enough; but time is passing, and I am going to knock the lot down. Come, there, at the end of the table, what do you say?"

This apostrophe was addressed to the clan of dealers who had taken no part in the battle. They thought it amusing to see two men bidding against one another, and hoped that the furniture would be handed over to one of the antagonists for double its value, without interference from them. But as the combatants' ardour diminished, one of the party took upon himself to set it going again.

"Eleven thousand two hundred!" said the dealer.

"Eleven thousand two hundred!" triumphantly repeated the clerk. "You, sir, in front there!"

The gentleman in front said nothing. He was, no doubt, more experienced than Viscount d'Amaulis in the tricks of the trade, and was mistrustful. But at last, after a few seconds of silence, the bass voice was heard again: "Twelve thousand!"

This imposing sum was duly proclaimed, and then commented upon as follows by the auctioneer:—"We are getting near, gentlemen! This lot would be cheap at fifteen thousand. One more bid, and I knock it down."

Savinien, who was beginning to be amused by these manœuvres, looked at the fair Anita to see what she wished, and she, before replying, turned her head towards the auctioneer. She had seen him preside before and knew at a glance that he was about to wind up. George Fougeray, who had remained standing beside the desk, said a few words to him. The hammer came down by slow degrees.

"Make haste, gentlemen! Is it decided? Do you hear? One!—two!"

"Say thirteen thousand, it is quite worth that," whispered the blonde.

The viscount repeated the amount, and his voice was lost in the noise of an altercation which had arisen in the hall between two loafers such as almost always occupy conspicuous places at large sales. But the auctioneer heard Savinien clearly enough. "For the third and last time, gentlemen, does no one bid any higher? Come, gentlemen, say the word!"

There was a short pause. The dealer who had bid before had got into a wrangle with a Philistine who was standing in his way, and the word did not come. So the hammer fell with a sharp sound.

"Knocked down at thirteen thousand francs, the entire lot!"

This official sentence was heard above the noise, and gave rise to an unexpected objection.

"Excuse me! twelve thousand," said the deep bass voice.

"Thirteen thousand—to this gentleman," said the auctioneer, pointing to Savinien.

"No! no! there's a mistake."

"I appeal to all here! The gentleman on the left had the last word."

"Yes! yes! we all heard it!" cried the group round Anita.

The public always sides with pretty women, and the public believed that it was the lady who had purchased the goods through the instrumentality of her attendant swain. However, the gentleman with the deep voice did not seem satisfied, and at the same time he elbowed his way through the crowd.

"Come, sir," said the auctioneer, gravely, "I beg of you don't disturb the sale. The lot is sold, and there can be no discussion on the matter." Then turning to his crier, he added: "Put up the old tapestries. Look at them, gentlemen, they are those at the end of the hall on the right."

Savinien had no thought of looking at them. He had just seen that his recent rival was Count Aparanda and could not believe his senses. But there was no possibility of a mistake. It was the same man who had been a few minutes before in the picture-room, and whom George Fougeray had pointed out to him. He had taken a place near the long table which served for displaying the objects sold, and was now but a few steps from Savinien and Anita, seemingly disposed to renew his protest as to the fairness of the sale. But the criers made as much noise as they could in announcing the superb sixteenth century tapestry; bidding was going on in all directions, and the auctioneer was conducting it very rapidly, without taking any more notice of Count Aparanda than if that nobleman had been still in the uttermost parts of Sweden. George glanced aside at him and looked at Savinien, as if to say that he had played him a clever trick. At this moment the viscount observed the auctioneer's secretary making signs for him to approach the desk, and as he did not appear to know the meaning of this, Anita undertook to tell him. "He is asking for your name and address," whispered she.

"Why?" said Savinien, with surprise.

"He must know whom those things have been sold to."

"But, madame, he sold them to you. I thought these people knew you."

"No matter. Give him your card," replied Anita, suppressing a strong inclination to laugh. "No, never mind," she added, "it is unnecessary. Your friend Fougeray is answering for you." And, indeed, George was talking with the clerk, who took down a memorandum at his dictation

The viscount, quite at sea, and giving up all attempt to understand the meaning of this, began once more examining Count Aparanda, and perceived that the fiery foreigner had grown perceptibly calmer. He no longer looked at the auctioneer in a rage, but, on the contrary, devoured the fair Anita with his eyes, her face being now turned towards the crowd. She observed this conduct on his part, and said to Savinien: "Do look! the twelve thousand man is staring at me to console himself for losing the furniture! He won't succeed any better with me than he did with the bidding. Do you know who he is? He has a face fit to scare a child. He looks like an ogre."

"George knows him, I believe," muttered the viscount, who had his own reasons for keeping silent as to the Swede.

"Good! he will tell me, then. I shouldn't be sorry to know the name of the personage of whom I have made a conquest; for he is conquered—that's easy to see. The lightning has struck him. I sometimes produce this effect. Unfortunately, the lightning never falls upon the person whom I wish to strike," added the actress, flashing an incendiary glance at Yvonne's cousin.

George Fougeray now drew near. "My little ones," said he, before Anita was able to question him, "it seems to me that we have no more time to lose, and that the moment has come for us to go."

"Never! Mariette Charlier asked me to buy her——"

"Two old Dresden candlesticks over there on the shelf, next to my Louis XVI. clock! I know that, but the clerk told me just now that these things are reserved for to-morrow's sale. We shall be obliged to return, my dear. So much the more reason for going off now. It is stifling here, and we are breathing bad air."

"Oh, I don't care to remain! But tell me the name of that man with the beard, who is staring at me—there, in front of us—on the other side of the table. D'Amaulis says that you know him."

"So does he, for that matter, and he had no need to refer you to me. He is Count Aparanda, an immensely wealthy Swede, who has come to live in Paris, and is just furnishing his house. He was buying pictures just now in the next room, and if I hadn't whispered a few words to the auctioneer he would have secured all that furniture. But we cut the grass from under his feet. I will apologise this evening to him."

"Where will you see him?" eagerly asked Anita.

"At my club. He was elected a member yesterday, and dines there to-day. I shall be introduced to him, and then I shall introduce Savinien."

"And you must introduce him to me some day. He is ugly, but he has a head full of character. He would be superb as Fra Diavolo."

"Do you wish to play comic opera with him? Ah! he is coming behind the scenes already. Let us go."

Anita, this time, did not need coaxing to raise the siege. She took the route by which she had come, and Savinien willingly followed her. He had had quite enough of the noise of the auction, and was anxious to clear up certain obscure matters. For the moment he thought no more of Count Aparanda. He had seen with satisfaction that the mysterious stranger paid no attention to him, which was quite natural, as they had found themselves face to face but once before at the door of the vaults of the Provincial Bank. They had but passed each other then, and the Swede had certainly paid no attention to the depositor coming next to him. However, the viscount had certain explanations to ask of George Fougeray

and of the fair Anita, who had just used and abused the courteous politeness of a gentleman from Brittany.

When they found themselves all three in the large vestibule of the first floor, the actress struck an attitude in front of Savinien, and said to him, with a peal of laughter: "You don't bear malice, viscount, do you?"

"What for?" asked Savinien, who did not expect this sally.

"Why, for having made you buy some furniture in spite of yourself."

"What do you mean?"

"What! didn't you guess that the bachelor's furniture is yours?"

"Excuse me, madame: you asked me to buy it, and I bought it for you, and it was only to oblige you that I consented to repeat your bids."

"What, really! You actually thought—but it's too funny! What should I do with a set of furniture for a bachelor! Do you suppose that I wish to make a present of it to one of my friends. That would be turning the world upside down, my dear sir! I do not make presents; I receive them."

"But, madame, I did not authorise you——"

"To buy for you. That may be; but the thing is done, and there is no getting out of it. Besides, what are you complaining of? Thanks to me, you have, for thirteen thousand francs, a set of furniture which is worth twenty thousand."

"No matter. I do not want it, and I will not pay for it."

"Are you so close as all that? You will destroy all my illusions as to viscounts from Brittany."

"I repeat, madame, that I bought nothing and will pay for nothing," said Savinien, angrily."

"Then *I* must," replied the lady. "Fie! for shame! a gentleman does not behave like that!"

Yvonne's cousin was about to say something extremely rude, when George interfered. "Reason a moment instead of getting angry," said he, quietly. "I was wrong as well as Anita. I thought that you had decided to follow my advice, and to profit by an excellent occasion for furnishing your rooms at an inexpensive rate. I just now gave your name to the clerk with your address. He will send you the bill to-morrow."

"And I will send him to the devil!"

"If you did that, my dear friend, we should pass for two badly-behaved fellows. Don't tell me that you care nothing for that. The opinion of the clerk and the auctioneer may be indifferent to you; but there are people in the hall who heard you bid—people belonging to our club—not to mention that Count Aparanda, who interests you so much, and who must be enraged with you for beating him in getting hold of the set of furniture."

Savinien started. Fougeray had hit the right nail on the head.

"Let the viscount alone," said Anita, scornfully. "If he persists in refusing, I will take the matter upon myself. It will cost me a few thousand francs, but we shall not quarrel."

This was too much. Viscount d'Amaulis, touched in his self-love, replied:

"No, madame, it shall not cost you anything. I will pay for the furniture which you have chosen to make me buy. I will bear the expense of a joke, which, you will allow me to say, was in very bad taste. But, as for keeping the furniture and using it, that is another matter."

"Why the mischief do you bother yourself about such a thing as

that?" exclaimed George, catching the ball on the rebound. "Why don't you send it to the rooms that Montauron proposed to you in the Rue Rembrandt?"

"Four rooms on the ground-floor, between court and garden, at three thousand francs a year—that is a chance that you will not have again, viscount," said a person who had heard Fougeray's last words, and whom Savinien was far from expecting to see.

"What! Bouret!" exclaimed Anita. "You are everywhere, great financier!"

"Wherever there are pretty women. Yes, princess." And turning to Savinien: "My dear viscount, Montauron talked a long time about you to me this morning; he is longing to have you take his rooms, and I should by all means do so if I were in your place. Good day, Fougeray," added M. Bouret, without giving Savinien time to reply, "I'll lay a wager that you came to buy the Louis XVI. clock? It was the only really authentic thing in Jeannine's house."

"It will not be sold till to-morrow," said George.

"I don't care. I don't want it. I came here in passing by, and I am glad that I did, as I meet you all three. What did you buy at the auction, fair Anita?"

"Nothing at all; but I was very nearly being fleeced to the tune of thirteen thousand francs."

"Bah! Tell me all about it."

"She is only bragging," said Fougeray, quickly, well knowing how Anita was apt to talk when she chose. "My friend D'Amaulis," added Fougeray, "has just had a complete set knocked down to him, which seems as though it had been made on purpose for the rooms which your partner proposes to let to him."

"Then I had better write to Montauron that you will take them, eh! viscount?"

"I have not made up my mind," stammered Savinien, who did not know how to answer all these people, who seemed to have combined their energies to make him take and furnish these rooms.

"I vow that you will find nothing better, and, besides, you will greatly annoy Montauron if you refuse; his wife told me so this morning," added M. Bouret. "They both are anxious to have you for a neighbour."

"So am I," said Anita, who had recovered her temper. "Don't forget, viscount, that I live in the Avenue Malesherbes, two steps from the Parc Monceau."

"Very well, my beauty!" exclaimed Bouret, "help us to convince Monsieur d'Amaulis that he cannot possibly stay so long at a hotel. Come, viscount, what objections have you to my dear director's plan? Do you dislike the neighbourhood?"

"Young man, if you say that you do it will scarcely be polite to me—or to Madame Montauron, either," added Anita, laughing.

"The neighbourhood pleases me very much, on the contrary."

"And so will the rooms. They are charming and so convenient! There are two entrances and secret doors as well. It is exactly as though Montauron had built the place to suit some Don Juan, and you have furniture, too, as you have just bought some. If it is the trouble of moving in that you dread, and having to attend to it yourself, do not let that disturb you. I will write to my upholsterer; he will do everything, and in three days you can be in the Rue Rembrandt. It is settled, is it not?"

"You will only have to pay the auctioneer," added George.

"And that won't trouble you," resumed M. Bouret, with a laugh. "When a man has made a hundred thousand francs he can easily gratify his little fancies. Fougeray gave you good advice. Last evening at the Ladies' Exchange the women were all talking about your neat hit. It may really be called a masterly stroke."

"What!" exclaimed the viscount, flushing to his ears, "everybody knows it?"

"Don't be surprised at that. Galipot told the tale from the house-tops. But it is only complimentary to you and Fougeray to have succeeded in so brilliant a manner. You are known now as being able to foresee things, and being both bold and lucky. Besides, it is delightful to be able to put some money on one side even if one does not need it. Ask your friend if it isn't."

"What, Fougeray!" exclaimed the actress, "you make a hundred thousand francs and you don't let me know? It is not pretty behaviour to keep such things from your friends. Whenever it happens again let me know by post."

And as Savinien looked disgusted, the crazy creature resumed, laughing in his face: "Don't be alarmed, I have no intention of borrowing your hundred thousand francs. But I must say, that if you don't take rooms and furnish them after such a lift you must be a perfect miser."

The viscount restrained himself from setting the impertinent woman in her place, and giving her a lesson in good behaviour in the presence of witnesses, and felt the more angry from feeling that what she said was true.

"Look there!" said George in a low tone, to divert his attention, "there goes our Swede!"

Savinien turned quickly, and saw Count Aparanda directing himself toward a hall in which there was an exhibition of *faïence*, china, and other art-pottery.

"This nobleman is certainly a good customer for the auctioneers," resumed Fougeray, "he goes from pictures to furniture, and from furniture to——"

"Do you believe that?" interrupted the blonde. "Didn't you just see how he stared at me? He doesn't care three straws for those plates. It was to see me that he came here. I'll bet anything that he won't go into that room there!"

"You lose, my dear friend, for he is there already. But I confess that he devoured you with his eyes as he passed by."

"Where the deuce have I seen that face before?" muttered M. Bouret. 'Ah! I remember now, and Monsieur d'Amaulis must remember also. It was that chap who was in our vaults when I took you to them. Is it not the same man, viscount?"

"I think so," stammered Savinien.

"That reminds me that I forgot to ask the head clerk his name, which he knows, as he gave him his card. You wanted to know it, did you not?"

"We all know it now," said George, "and we dine with him this evening."

"Indeed! but then——"

"We know his name, but not him, and he doesn't know us. We dine with him at the club."

"Ah, indeed! What club do you belong to?"

"The Plungers' Club."

"Ah! yes, I know! It seems they play a stiff game there. If you are as lucky at baccarat as on 'Change you will soon be millionaires, both of you. I hope that you will win all that that gentleman has in the chest which he deposited at the Provincial Bank. Imagine, my dear fellow, his bringing us a chest which looked as though it weighed two hundred pounds! A porter had charge of it. If it is full of bullion, its owner will be able to play a high game."

"Till we manage to clean him out!" laughed George.

For half an hour Savinien had been on red-hot coals. Everything combined to throw him into a fever of anxiety, and it seemed as though all the people he met had conspired to bring to his mind what he so particularly wanted to forget—his unwished-for success at the Bourse, the adventure with Madame Montauron, and the visit to the vaults where the steel casket belonging to that lady, and the mysterious stranger's wooden chest, were placed. Bouret was always alluding to this last matter as though he took a pleasure in annoying Viscount d'Amaulis, who was beginning to realise that he was not strong enough to struggle against the difficulties in which chance had placed him. All Paris now knew that he had made two hundred thousand francs in company with George Fougeray, and he was no longer able of his own will to avoid relations with Madame Montauron or Count Aparanda, whom he would willingly have met no more. His patience failed him in this contest against fate, which seemed to force him into situations which he himself did not create, and he suddenly resolved to plunge into the furnace. He did as generals do when, after at first refusing to give battle, they fight fiercely on seeing that they cannot do otherwise.

"Sir," said he, suddenly, to M. Bouret, "will you be kind enough to tell Monsieur Montauron that I accept his offer?"

"Certainly. I shall see him this evening. My upholsterer will take charge of the furniture which you have just bought, and before the end of the week you will be comfortably settled."

"This is as it should be!" exclaimed George, "at last you have made up your mind."

"Yes, to everything," replied Savinien, drily. "I shall dine at the club this evening, and to prove it, I will now leave you and go and dress. Call for me at a quarter to seven. I must see you without fail, as we have an account to settle." And without stopping for ceremony which he judged superfluous, Yvonne's cousin rushed down the stairs and out of the door.

"Ah!" said he, setting his teeth, "they plot together to compel me to keep this money, and to live their life, which I despise and loathe! Well, I will keep the cash, but only to squander it, and I hope that it will not last long. I will go and live in the rooms which Monsieur Montauron wishes to let to me, but I will only stay there long enough to save his wife, and when I tell the imprudent woman what I know about Count Aparanda, when I have succeeded in giving her back the casket which she thrust upon me, then, and no later, I will fly to Plouër, and I will never leave it again. I have had a surfeit of bankers, brokers, guilty wives, Swedish adventurers, and actresses who treat everybody with the utmost familiarity. Let them worship the Golden Pig if they like! I shall be content to worship my cousin."

V.

"Money does not create happiness" is an old saying, the accuracy of which is much disputed by poor folks, who have never been able to find out its truth.

The rich all think that this specimen of proverbial precept is correct, and that it does not suffice to possess millions to feel glad at heart, but this does not prove that they would like to be poor, or care to rush to ruin. Those who have never known poverty often form a poetic idea of it, and dream of the sweetness of a Bohemian life, just as, seated at a good fire, one might think of the charms of an excursion to the North Pole. But when such a life has of necessity been led, its bitterness, its constant struggle against privation of all kinds, while waiting for success, deprive one of any illusion as to its charms or any desire to repeat the experiment. It may be remembered with pleasure mingled with pride, like a soldier, who, having won his epaulets, remembers the sufferings and dangers of the hard campaign which brought him his superior rank, but this does not prove that he would care to go over the same ground again.

Age and care come at the same time as fortune; youth and gaiety have vanished as well as adversity, and will not return, although evil days may do so. The future has become narrower, the horizon has clouded. The opposite side of pleasure is most obvious, and the nothingness of all things most clear.

This was somewhat the case with M. Montauron, although he had a great deal of philosophy in his composition, and no tendency whatever to pessimism. Few men could boast as he might of his luck, and he had not the bad taste to complain of age, or even to assume the attitude of a worn-out man, tired of the world's pleasures. His was not a fretful mind, and besides, he had no time to be melancholy. Idle people can indulge in longings, aspire to unknown felicity, and create imaginary griefs; but a financier, borne along by the current of business, does not amuse himself by analyzing his sensations, or seeking for the cause of what he feels, and no one in all Paris was more absorbed in business than was M. Charles Montauron.

Chairman and managing director of a powerful company, a bold speculator taking part in all great enterprises, he scarcely realised the flight of time, and he lacked the leisure for reflection. For twenty years, since his good luck had set in, he had gone ever onward, urged by the whirlwind which carries with it all men of money: he had obeyed the voice which cries out, "On! on! you must not stop; you cannot pause! You can rest only in the grave!"

Charles Montauron had begun life without money, influence, or connection. What he was he owed it only to himself, to his labour, intelligence, the correctness of his judgment, and also to his rigid integrity in business matters; for he had not waded through the mire in order to succeed, as so many unscrupulous people unhesitatingly do. He had a right, therefore, to enjoy in peace an immense fortune honestly accumulated. But rest to his ardent nature would have been death. He needed the fever of the struggle, the thrilling emotions of the battles decided at the Bourse. After having fought his way from the ranks upward, in order to make a position, and to conquer, he now did battle for the pleasure of fighting.

This financier, however, had a heart; he had loved, and he loved still. He had married for love after making a fortune of three millions of francs, taking to himself, at thirty-five years of age, a wife thirteen years his junior, a young girl who had but fifty thousand francs as her dowry.

At that moment of his life he thought of giving up business, and satisfying himself with a happy life, for he was happy; his wife was charming, and he had not married her for money; she, on her side, was fond of him, and would have accepted him had he been poor. It was she who had induced him to remain in business, not that she was either ambitious or greedy; but because she understood that if he abandoned his calling it would be a sacrifice made to her.

During twelve years of married life the only serious sorrow which they had known had been that of having no children. She had suffered as much as he from this misfortune; but, in time, both had become resigned to it, and had laid down a plan of life. They met at breakfast hours and in the evening. The husband's day was taken up by business; that of the wife by charity. They did not care for what is called society; if M. Montauron gave dinners and received on Fridays, it was because his position obliged him to do so, and he received men only.

Madame Montauron had no other friends than those of her husband, and did not admit any women into her intimacy, although she knew all the wives of the wealthy Parisian bankers, women who possess more diamonds than quarterings of nobility.

It is true that she did not belong to the same class, being the daughter of a ruined nobleman, said to have descended from the dukes of Brittany. Aurélie de Louvigné, an orphan at twenty, had thought of taking the veil in the convent, where she had been educated, when an old friend of the deceased Count de Louvigné took it into his head to effect her marriage on her return from a trip to Italy, where she had gone with an old cousin, her only living relative, who, every year, wintered at Pisa for the benefit of her health. The experiment was not long successful, as she died one month after the wedding of her young charge.

The marriage created no sensation. Montauron was a millionaire of too recent date to be known beyond the limits of a small circle. Aurélie de Louvigné, remaining alone in the world, fled from notoriety as anxiously as others seek it. Thus, few knew the true story of this marriage, or were acquainted with the past life of the husband and the wife. It was only known that their conjugal felicity had been untroubled, and that their tastes were the same, as they both preferred a calm and retired life to the bustle of society. A few people gifted with great penetration, of the class of those who do not judge by appearances, but dive to the depths of things, declared that the happiness of the Montaurons was not without its clouds. They had observed that the husband was jealous, and the wife profoundly melancholy. This jealousy was, doubtless, without cause; the sadness without reason; unless, indeed, the jealousy was retrospective, and the sadness due to bye-gone sources.

However, these observers were few and not ill-disposed, so that society, properly so called, did not busy itself with a couple who gave no cause for remark. Had the walls of the house in the Avenue Ruysdaël been of glass, curious tattlers would have seen nothing there worth the trouble of repeating in those abodes where scandal is enjoyed.

M. Montauron occupied the entire right wing of the house, and only received business people. Madame Montauron remained in her apart-

ments in the left wing and only left them to visit the hot-house, or to ramble about the garden which was very large.

It was only at meal-times that they met upon neutral ground, as it were, in the large dining-room on the ground-floor, and these enforced meetings never took place without witnesses. With married people of small means breakfast and dinner are given up to private talk. The wealthy are condemned, however, to endure the presence of servants. Two tall lackeys served Monsieur and Madame Montauron, who in their presence could only speak of indifferent subjects.

It seldom happened that the husband could give a moment to confidential conversation after the meal; such a chance had occurred, however, on the day when Savinien d'Amaulis paid his first visit to his uncle's banker, and a similar opportunity offered itself on Thursday, the day before the banker's weekly reception. M. Montauron usually went out after leaving his wife, who returned to her rooms, where she had no companion except Brigitte, an old nurse, who had brought her up and had gradually become her confidante and friend.

On this particular evening, however, the banker suggested a stroll in the park, but Madame Montauron, who was afraid of the cool evening air, preferred to seat herself beside him under a verandah overlooking the garden.

They sat alone, motionless and thoughtful. Night was gathering. Their servants were out of hearing, yet for some minutes they had not exchanged a single word.

Madame Montauron, accustomed to this silence on her husband's part, as his mind was always occupied with serious business matters, felt somewhat surprised when he suddenly said to her: "Do you remember, my dear Aurélie, the little house which you lived in at Ville d'Avray with your cousin, Madame de Morvieux?"

"How could I forget it, my dear?" exclaimed Madame Montauron, surprised by this sudden evocation of the past. "Was it not there that I first saw you?"

"Yes," said the banker, gravely, "it was on just such an evening as this. The leaves were sprouting in the woods of Ville d'Avray. You had returned from Italy, and you were still more afraid of the cold than you are now, for you were ill. I can see you as you then looked, pale and sad, leaning on Baron de Trémorin's arm. He endeavoured to coax you to take a turn in the little garden which your cousin had rented, so that your recovery might be hastened. I had just been introduced to you, and the more I admired your charming face the more awkward and embarrassed I became."

"I was much more timid than yourself," said Madame Montauron, smiling, "for I knew why you had come. I knew Monsieur de Trémorin's purpose; my cousin had told me of it, and gave it her full approval. It was a perfect plot to marry us, and you were in it. I must needs yield, being one against three. Six weeks afterwards I was your wife. It is very gallant of you, my dear, to remember all this after twelve years. That evening fixed my destiny."

"It seems to me as though it were yesterday," remarked the husband.

"You do not yet regret, I hope, the determination you took that day?"

"I love you as I loved you then," was the reply. "The heart does not grow old."

"No, Charles. Everything has changed in these twelve years, except ing my heart. I wish that you could read it. It is full of you, and I often reproach myself with not telling you all its feelings. I dare not, lest you should think me foolish, for, remember, I am growing old."

"It is I who am ridiculous in talking to you of love at my age, and so abruptly. I have passed the entire day thinking of money matters, and I suddenly return to the language of passion, as though I were only twenty years old. Bouret would laugh, if he could hear me."

"I trust that Monsieur Bouret's opinion is a matter of indifference to you?"

"As to questions of feeling, it certainly is. Bouret looks at life differently from me. He only thinks of money and material satisfaction, while I, I declare to you, Aurélie, should be only too happy if I could rid myself of my fetters, by leaving Paris and the whirl of business, to go to live with you in the country. This very evening I was reminded of Ville d'Avray, by seeing Monsieur d'Amaulis."

"Monsieur d'Amaulis?" said Madame Montauron, endeavouring to hide a nervous start. "Excuse me, my dear, if I don't see what connection——"

"Didn't Monsieur de Trémorin arrange our marriage? Monsieur d'Amaulis is the nephew of the man to whom I owe my happiness," interrupted the husband.

"That is true. But I believe that Monsieur d'Amaulis knows nothing about all that."

"No. I don't think that his uncle told him, and I am not much surprised as to the silence he has kept respecting our former relations. The baron is the closest man with regard to personal matters that I am acquainted with. I see that young Savinien d'Amaulis is entirely ignorant of the fact that Monsieur de Trémorin has a large interest in the Provincial Bank, and that he himself has been made a shareholder. His uncle, who manages his property, has made it four times what it was in a few years' time, and has told him nothing about it. The viscount thinks himself quite poor."

"Monsieur de Trémorin probably thought that he might have been led to squander his money."

"Oh, I don't blame him for guarding against that! But I fear that his precautionary measures will not serve to protect the young man. However, on the whole, the baron has acted wisely. Still, I understand nothing of his way of proceeding as to other matters."

"What has he done that you fail to understand?"

"Did you never wonder, my dear, why he has never visited us since our marriage?"

"No, it never occurred to me," stammered Madame Montauron.

"What! didn't you ever think it strange that he has never even called here?"

"He lives in Brittany, his interests keep him there."

"His interests, on the contrary, ought often to bring him to Paris, as the bulk of his fortune is invested here. He has only been here two or three times within twelve years, and what astonishes me is that his first visit should not have been to you."

"I thought that you received him on all of these occasions."

"So I did. He never failed to come to my office in the Avenue de l'Opéra. But each time he came it was just at the moment of closing for

he day, and he never found time to dine here, or set foot here. This, you will admit, Aurélie, was a most singular way of acting. It looks as though he had sworn to avoid you, although he was your father's friend and your cousin's, and took such an affectionate interest in you before your marriage, which was due to him, for, without his intervention, I should probably never have met you. It was he, who taking advantage of our business relations, induced me to go to see Madame de Morvieux. What did he not say of you at the time? A father could not have praised his daughter's good qualities more warmly, and you certainly deserved all that he said. I have blessed him many times for having given me a treasure by inducing you to accept my hand. But, since then, after securing our mutual happiness, he has taken no more notice of you whatever. How can you explain this change?"

"I cannot explain it," replied Madame Montauron, in a husky voice. "I am sure I never done anything to wound or shock him, and I think that you exaggerate matters a little, my dear. Monsieur de Trémorin has peculiarities of character; he is very eccentric, very whimsical—you have had many proofs of that. We scarcely knew that he had a daughter and a nephew, and his wife has never called upon me, either since or before my marriage. But what shows that he has no serious cause of anger as regards me, is that, on sending his nephew to Paris, he expressly enjoined upon him to present himself not only at your office, but at our house."

"True: I am, however, surprised that he did not write direct to you. Still this is no reason why you should not cordially receive Viscount d'Amaulis, who, besides, deserves that you should interest yourself in him, and appears to me to greatly need your advice and mine. We must try to find a wife for him; don't you think so? If only to repay the baron, we ought to do that. We will give the nephew the same happiness as the uncle has given to us."

"I should be glad to do so, but are you not afraid, my dear, of thwarting Monsieur de Trémorin's plans? His own daughter would be an excellent match for Viscount d'Amaulis," said Madame Montauron.

"Certainly, but she will never have the five millions that Julia Foureas now possesses, and which the latter would bring as a dowry to Viscount d'Amaulis."

"I doubt whether Julia Foureas would please the young man, or the marriage suit Monsieur de Trémorin."

"Owing to the source of her fortune?" asked the banker. "Good heavens! I don't pretend to say that the father was irreproachable, but he is dead, and his daughter is not responsible for his acts. She is pretty and well-bred. Her guardian wishes to find a titled husband for her. We may as well undertake to find one. I have quite made up my mind to introduce Monsieur d'Amaulis to her to-morrow. It may lead to what it may, or rather to what he chooses it should lead. You invited her here, did you not?"

"Yes, my dear, and I am rather afraid that she will not be very pleased at finding merely a few business men, and being herself the only young lady present."

"We can have some music as a change, Julia has rather a pretty voice. You can accompany her, unless Monsieur d'Amaulis does so, if by chance he studied music at Plouer, which I doubt. Do you know, Aurélie, why I should be glad to bring about this young man's marriage?"

"You told me a moment ago," was the reply. "Through gratitude towards his uncle."

"And for another reason. I fear that Monsieur d'Amaulis is making very foolish mistakes. Trémorin wished that he should see something of Paris life. I am afraid that he will see too much of it. He was not here a week before he had got into an intrigue."

"An intrigue?" repeated Madame Montauron.

"Yes, indeed. Did you hear what Bouret said to me the other day in the conservatory about a certain casket?"

"A casket?" repeated Madame Montauron, in a faint voice; "no—I do not remember."

She had turned frightfully pale, but twilight had now fallen, and the verandah was not lighted up.

The banker did not see his wife's change of countenance, or if he did, it was not apparent in his manner. "Yes, my love," he resumed, rubbing his hands, "on the very day after his arrival, he came to deposit a very pretty steel casket in the vaults of the Provincial Bank."

"It seems to me now that I do remember that Monsieur Bouret spoke of it before me, but I do not see how that proves that Monsieur d'Amaulis is engaged in carrying on an intrigue."

"It is as clear as day. What do you suppose there is in this casket?"

"Money or valuables, I should say. Were not your vaults built expressly for the purpose of being used as deposit places for such things?"

"Certainly. Then you think that this young man has been saving money down there in Brittany, and that, instead of confiding it to his uncle, he has shut it up in a casket, and brought it with him to Paris?"

"Didn't you say that he was rich?"

"I told you that Monsieur de Trémorin had very skilfully and profitably invested his nephew's fortune, but he knows nothing about it. He thinks that he has six thousand francs a year, and no more. He does not spend this income at Plouër, for the excellent reason that he does not receive it, as the baron manages all things. Monsieur d'Amaulis asks for money when he needs it. He, therefore, does not lay by any savings. He came to Paris with a letter of credit on our house, and the proof that he does not roll in gold is, that on the day after he arrived he made haste to draw the paltry sum of a thousand francs from us. I conclude, from all this, that the casket does not contain money, but something else."

"Family papers, perhaps," timidly suggested Madame Montauron.

"Nonsense! Uncle Trémorin must have the care of all titles and documents as well as of the money. He is cashier and keeper of the archives at one and the same time."

"Then I cannot guess——"

"What is in the casket? You are not very cunning, my dear Aurélie! The first Parisian woman you consult would tell you that the casket is crammed with letters."

"Letters?"

"Yes; letters from some woman, who is, or has been, the viscount's mistress. He values these relics of love, he takes them everywhere about with him, and as hotel rooms are not safe, he thought it best to hire one of our hiding-places to shut up his precious treasure."

"Do you really think, then, that the young man has had a serious attachment already?"

"Why not? He has everything in his favour."

"You forget, my dear, that he sees very little of society."

"True: but he lived for a time at Rennes. She has gone during the aside season to Saint-Malo and Dinard. Chances for flirting with me fair Parisienne have not been wanting. I will wager, now I think f it, that the lady lives in Paris, and that she has asked him to return er her correspondence. He, perhaps, made the journey on purpose to ive her letters back to her."

"What an imagination you have, my dear Charles!" said Madame Montauron, smiling. She had gradually recovered her composure after at first feeling greatly alarmed by her husband's mention of the casket. She ow saw that he was on the wrong track, and, as she had never been to he seaside in Brittany, she no longer feared that he suspected her.

"Imagination! I!" exclaimed the banker. "Men of business have only common sense and clear-sightedness. I see that Monsieur d'Amaulis s caught in the net of some coquette, and I should like to marry him to some one so as to get him out of his trouble, if it still be possible. I sus- pect that he will not be long before claiming his casket, as he now has a place to put it in."

"How is that? You said just now that hotels were not safe."

"Monsieur d'Amaulis is no longer at a hotel."

"Since when?"

"This morning. He decided to accept the offer I made him in your presence."

"What! he is——"

"My tenant for six months. Yes, my love. He lost no time in getting into his new rooms. A friend secured a complete set of furniture for him at the auction-rooms. Bouret sent him his upholsterer—an expeditious man. In three days all was ready. He will sleep to-night in my house in the Rue Rembrandt. I am really delighted to have him for a neighbour. I do not propose watching him, but I hope that he will make fewer blunders, being, so to speak, under the very eyes of his uncle's friends."

Madame Montauron said nothing. The news which her husband imparted troubled her, and she reflected upon the possible consequences of Savinien d'Amaulis' change of abode.

"Trémorin will thank me for what I have done," resumed the banker. "His nephew, I fear, is only too ready to plunge into a life of mere amusement, and he has fallen into bad hands. That Fougeray, his old schoolfellow, made him win a hundred thousand francs at the Bourse, and introduced him into a third-rate club, where reckless play goes on. Bouret told me that on the very first night Monsieur D'Amaulis lost a large amount to a foreigner, who is a man of very suspicious character."

"Ah!" murmured Madame Montauron, somewhat absently.

"Yes, good heavens! these clubs are full of men who come, no one knows whence, and cheat unsuspecting players. The man who robbed Monsieur d'Amaulis of a portion of his profits on 'Change was a Swede, and calls himself, it appears, Count Aparanda. But what ails you, my love? Are you ill?"

"No, no, it is nothing, it is only a chill caused by this cool evening air," murmured Madame Montauron, who had not been able to prevent herself from starting nervously.

"And I am keeping you out here under this porch exposed to winds from all sides!" exclaimed the banker, rising hurriedly. "I am unpar-

donable for having forgotten that the night air doesn't suit you. I will ring for lights and see you to your own room."

"No, my love; I am quite comfortable here, and I so seldom have the pleasure of passing an evening with you."

"I wish that I could give it all to you, my dear Aurélie. Unfortunately I must attend a shareholders' meeting to-night, and must leave you. But you must promise me to go into the house. These trees make the porch very damp. It is charming to be in the garden, but in the spring, when the sun has set, it isn't healthy."

"You are right, Charles. I will return to my room. Brigitte will read to me."

"Look there, my love!" exclaimed M. Montauron, "see the effect of our young friend moving into his new rooms. It is only nine o'clock, and he has already returned. Is not this a beginning of good behaviour?"

"Monsieur d'Amaulis? How do you know?"

"I see a light in his room. Look! over there, at the end of the low railing that encloses this side; the two windows which are lighted up on the ground-floor are those I mean, the ones on the right hand."

"Ah! that is the place?"

"Yes. The rooms I have let to him face us. You know that the garden belonging to our house joins the smaller one which I laid out three years ago in the Rue Rembrandt? Monsieur d'Amaulis will have to be on his good behaviour," added M. Montauron. "From our first-floor windows we can see everything that goes on in his rooms."

A man in livery, who had been rung for, now appeared with a lamp, and this servant's arrival gave Madame Montauron an excuse for remaining silent.

Her husband no longer thought of his new neighbour. He had taken out his watch, and this indicated that he was about to go to the shareholders' meeting he had spoken of; it was indeed already late.

"I have just time to get there," said he, sighing. "I hate business when it obliges me to go out at a time when I wish to stay at home. Heaven knows whether I shall even be able to break away from business so as to breakfast with you! I haven't belonged to myself for some days past. I forget hours, I forget——"

"You will not forget our reception to-morrow evening?" interrupted Madame Montauron, trying to smile.

"No, my dear Aurélie," answered the banker, in a gay tone; "I have not yet lost my head. Ah! speaking of the reception, do me the favour to wear all your diamonds. I wish you to dazzle the eyes of Baron de Trémorin's nephew. It is agreed, is it not? All your diamonds!"

With this M. Montauron went off, after kissing his wife's hand. She had scarcely strength to rise from the arm-chair in which she was seated.

"My diamonds!" she murmured. "Ah! I am lost!"

VI.

Savinien had made a really good bargain at the Hôtel des Ventes, and M. Bouret's upholsterer had surpassed himself. The furniture, bought by auction, seemed as though it had been expressly made for furnishing the ground floor in the Rue Rembrandt, and the upholsterer had only required two days to arrange it. Everything was ready, Viscount

naulis had only to order his luggage to be sent there. The hotel
er at the Rue du Helder undertook to receive such letters as might
e, and to forward them daily, as Savinien did not think fit to inform
inmates of the manor of Plouer of his change of residence. He had
n these rooms and furnished them almost in a fit of spite, and looked
h his stay in them as but transient. To make all things fitting a valet
necessary; but, although George Fougeray had offered to find one,
nien had begged him not to be over-hasty in the matter, and had
ented himself, for the time being, with the services of his door-keeper.
nien did not wish to make any permanent arrangements, for the
llent reason that he was more than ever determined to leave Paris as
as his hundred thousand francs were spent, and Madame Montauron's
culties arranged.

He had determined to return to Plouer with clean hands and a clear
d, even supposing that after his return it should be necessary to tell
uncle all the adventures of his shortened stay. As regards his money,
ooked likely that there would soon be an end to that. George had
e no trouble about receiving his share, and Savinien had diminished
own portion by thirty thousand francs, of which fifteen thousand had
n swept away at baccarat, as payment for his welcome at the Plungers'
b. He hoped that the rest would not go far, although he declined any
ectionable help in squandering it. Avoiding Anita, he looked up
némar de Lallemas, who made several racing bets for his young relative
le waiting till he could obtain his admission to the "Jockey." As for
"Plungers," Savinien had not returned there, although he might have
Count Aparanda there, as the latter regularly put in an appearance
ry evening. The two gentlemen had been introduced to each other at
ner on the evening after the auction sale, and this meal had been
owed by heavy play, at which the Swede won almost all that Savinien
. But the latter was no more advanced concerning the noble foreigner,
o greatly puzzled him, being extremely reserved, and apparently little
posed to become intimate with the members of a club at which he only
peared for the sake of winning money at cards.

There was nothing to be learned by going there, and the viscount could
ascertain anything elsewhere about him without compromising the im-
dent woman whom he wished to serve. He had determined to do
hing until Madame Montauron could tell him clearly what she expected
him. He remembered the conversation in the conservatory, and he
ied upon her to bring about an opportunity for a fresh interview, a
ger and less closely watched one. He did not hope that such an
asion would present itself at the Friday reception, but he thought that
dame Montauron would profit by this evening gathering, to tell him
w to meet her elsewhere. The more numerous the guests in a room the
s difficult it is, even for the hostess, to exchange a few private words
th one of the persons she had invited.

The Friday which was again to place Savinien d'Amaulis in the
sence of the banker and his wife drew nearer and nearer. Since his
st and only visit to the mansion in the Avenue Ruysdael he had not
n either of them, although he had become their tenant. The obliging
d indefatigable Bouret had undertaken to arrange with his partner for
e moving-in, as well as to hasten the moving-out of the previous tenant.
nd so, on Thursday evening, Baron de Trémorin's nephew took possession
his rooms, after dining alone at a restaurant, where he was sure of only

meeting country people. He wished to avoid George, who was always proposing a house-warming with objectionable company, and he wanted to retire early, after writing a letter to his uncle in terms which it was difficult to find, as it was necessary to disguise the truth, and yet not tell a falsehood.

Before setting about this difficult task, Savinien amused himself with making an inventory of his unexpected possessions in the way of furniture, and looking around his so suddenly selected rooms. All was as it should be. The furniture was new and in good taste, the place convenient. The viscount had never been so handsomely lodged in his life. It was true that family portraits were lacking, as well as distant views to contemplate from the windows. The entrance was through a courtyard which faced the Rue Rembrandt, and there was an exit by way of a garden full of flowers, of which the ground-floor tenant had the exclusive enjoyment, and which was only separated by a railing from an immense park filled with trees a hundred years old.

Savinien, who was not familiar with the topography of this part of Paris, was some little time in recollecting what park this was. But suddenly he remembered that it was the very one through which he had strolled one morning with M. Montauron, and that the superb house seen in the distance was the abode of the rich financier. This proximity caused him to reflect. He seated himself on a garden bench near one of his windows, and smoked several cigars while he thought of the danger to which Madame Montauron was exposed, and the possibilities of meeting her.

"It seems to me," he thought, "that it depends upon her alone to come to my rooms without being seen. She has certainly some way of going in and out without being observed, as neither her husband nor her servants knew anything of her absence on the morning when she went to the Rue du Helder hotel. It would be much easier to slip out at night, and if she has a key of the gate between the two gardens, she will have no difficulty in arranging a private interview with me."

He then asked himself whether he ought to desire a visit at night time from the woman he wished to save, but whom he did not care to follow along a dangerous path. And, little by little, he examined his own conscience, and analysed his feelings as regarded Madame Montauron, asking his heart whether it entered into the interest he took in her.

She was still beautiful, this compromised, or rather this guilty woman—for she had certainly guilt to reproach herself with—and at Savinien's age, a young man is greatly in danger of falling in love with an erring woman if he undertakes to protect her. He thought himself in no danger of becoming too deeply interested, but he did not care to be exposed to peril too often, and arrived at the conclusion that he would do wisely by freeing himself as soon as possible of all communion of interest with this lady.

What remained to be effected after all? The removal of a casket deposited at the Provincial Bank, and its restoration to its owner. The first of these operations was very simple ; it remained for Madame Montauron to facilitate the second. Savinien did not need to know the contents of the casket, nor was he any more anxious for precise information concerning Count Aparanda. What did it matter to him, after all, whether the Swede was or was not Madame Montauron's lover ! At the utmost he was only bound to tell her that this peculiar individual apparently intended to remain in Paris, and that she could obtain his address at the Plungers' Club.

When Savinien re-entered his rooms, after a long stay in the open air, had made up his mind not to worry himself over-much, but to bring these complicated and perilous affairs to a speedy conclusion. The moment was well chosen for writing to his uncle, and at the same time to his cousin Yvonne. He found his lamp lighted and his writing materials ready, the door-keeper having been desirous of proving from the outset that he could wait as well as any valet.

Savinien sat down near the table, and after the usual heading: "My dear uncle," he stopped short. His ideas refused to come. He was far from having a fine style, but wrote with some facility as a general rule, and when addressing his uncle he was not apt to be at a loss. M. de Trémorin, a man of excellent good sense, did not exact fine phrases, or a ceremonious way of writing. He only asked his nephew to be clear and sincere, and carried his love of frankness so far that, on the day of their parting, he had advised him to hide nothing, not even his flirtations from him, promising him not to mention these little amusements to his daughter Yvonne.

Still, on this evening, for the first time, Savinien's pen, instead of flying over the paper, remained motionless between his fingers. This was not because he had nothing to say. On the contrary, he could have written ten pages had he not hesitated to explain how he was situated. The difficulty lay with his winnings at the Bourse, and his losses at the Lungers' Club. The owner of Plouer had not always lived on his estate; Savinien knew that he had been rather wild in his youth, and was aware that this fact induced him to be very indulgent as to the failings of others. His exceptional uncle had in his last letter advised the viscount not to spend in Paris the life of a "college scout"—such was the term which he made use of to deter him from excess of wisdom.

He could not object to the viscount promptly ridding himself of the profits of one of those strokes of luck which a gentleman does not seek, but which he may avail himself of when they come. It was probable, also, that the baron would not blame him for the purchase of the furniture and the moving to the elegant ground-floor in the Rue Rembrandt, where all the houses seemed built to harbour the wealthy. Savinien was supposed to remain in Paris for six months. He was not forbidden to live suitably, instead of remaining at a hotel. He might, therefore, speak of these matters to his uncle without any danger of exciting his anger. But it was impossible for him to mention his strange adventure with Madame Montauron, and as this was linked with all the other incidents of his sojourn in Paris, there was not one of these he could speak of without reservation to M. de Trémorin. It was, nevertheless, necessary to write a long letter to him, and he had been promising so to do for some days past, but had only found time to scribble off a laconic note in which affectionate expressions and good wishes took the place of absent details.

The time had now come for Savinien to keep his word, and, besides, he greatly wished to obtain from his uncle some facts as to Madame Montauron's past, and her former relations with M. de Trémorin, who, so he said, had brought about her marriage. The question was not easily broached, and it was a delicate one to treat; but, taking a roundabout way, it was not impossible to lay it before M. de Trémorin without arousing any feelings of suspicion on his part.

Savinien had tact and skill enough to try this somewhat risky experiment The hour, besides, was well suited for writing a letter of which he

wished to weigh every word. He had closed the window overlooking the garden. The doorkeeper who served him as valet was too well trained to allow any one to disturb him. The most profound silence prevailed around. The house was inhabited only by quiet people, and at ten o'clock at night vehicles do not pass along the Rue Rembrandt, unless some reception is being held at a private residence in the neighbourhood.

Besides, the rooms being between court and garden, sounds did not reach them from without. These rooms consisted of four divisions, as M. Bouret had stated; four separate apartments, without counting the ante-room, which was entered by a door communicating with a wide hall running from the courtyard to the garden; a dining-room was contiguous to a smoking-room, and, further off, a dressing-room communicated with a bedroom.

The dining-room was reached before the dressing-room, and had two windows overlooking the courtyard, the smoking-room was entered before the bedroom, and had also two windows. These faced the garden, those of the smoking-room being level with it, and it was in this last apartment that Savinien sat himself down to write to his uncle. All of these rooms, be it noted, communicated with one another. But they might—all of them—be examined without passing twice by the same doorway, excepting the entrance one adjoining the hall. From the ante-room a person might proceed straight into the dining-room or smoking-room as he pleased.

The provincial architect who had formerly built Plouër Manor had not taken such pains as these with that feudal erection; and Savinien concluded that one is much better located in Parisian houses which do not last four centuries, but which are made, as they should be, for the convenience of their occupants. He was surprised to find how delightful his little nest was, and congratulated himself upon having left the Rue du Helder, where disagreeable intrusions might again occur. "Here, at least," thought he, "jealous husbands will not rush in upon me."

After mature reflection he ended by writing as follows:—"My dear uncle,—If I do not write as often as I should like to do, you must lay the blame of it upon those who have so warmly received me, our relations and friends who do this on your account I do not know which of them to satisfy first, and my time is taken up in making and receiving visits."

"This is not the exact state of the case," muttered the nephew to himself, "but it is only partly untrue, for had he not introduced me to Monsieur Montauron by letter, I should have had plenty of leisure. Since my arrival I have been taken up entirely with the husband and the wife."

Returning to his difficult task, he wrote: The Viscountess de Loudinières, who is a Trémorin, would like to have me dine with her three times a week, if only to introduce me to all her relatives in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, but I fight against this because she declares that she will marry me to some heiress. It seems that she has always a ready supply. I don't doubt their attractions, but I have taken it into my head to be married at the old church at Plouër, and these young ladies would think that too far off.

He paused again, and resumed his soliloquy. "This time, I say what I mean, and I hope that my uncle will read that part aloud to Yvonne. One more side-dish as it were, before coming to the best part. Now for my dexterous transition to the Montaurons."

"My cousin Adhémar de Laffemas," he wrote, "has no thought of getting me to marry, or of being married himself, but he has shown me a

reat deal of attention. He is acquainted with the best society, and I ould easily obtain a footing in it, for, if I did as he wishes, we should ever be apart. But I defend myself against him also. I value my estate, nd I should soon be reduced to selling it if I listened to him."

"If my uncle," thought Savinien, "knew that I had made, on the day fter my arrival, enough money to buy a very pretty farm, he would dmire my prudence. But that is not the matter in hand. I will now ttack the main question. What shall I say of Monsieur Montauron's anner of receiving me? Ah! I have it!"

"Your banker," he wrote, "could not have treated me with more ourtesy, had I been the largest shareholder in the Provincial Bank, hich is kept like a minister's offices. When one enters this princely stablishment, it seems as though a word might make one leave t a millionaire. I am almost tempted to think that if I applied to Monsieur Montauron, he would make my fortune for me instead of elping to ruin me, as might cousin Adhémar. The powerful capitalist verwhelmed me with offers of service, and introduced me to his wife, who s charming. She received me very graciously, and I can, to a certain xtent, understand this, as she told me, to my great surprise, that you had made her marriage. I confess that I had no idea of that, as before this rip you never mentioned her to me. That reminds me, my dear uncle, hat I should very much like to know—you will say that I have a great eal of curiosity, but never mind—I should very much like to know what was her maiden name, and I naturally hesitated to ask her the question."

Savinien had just reached this point when a slight noise caused him to urn his head. It seemed to him as though he had heard the sharp sound of a closing gate. He looked out of the window, saw nothing and resumed is occupation but the ensuing phrase was long in coming.

"Is she related to you?" he added, after reflecting. "You told me that she was of very good family, and it is sufficient to see her to be sure that she does not belong to the same society as her husband. How did this marriage come about? I confess that I have wondered at it, and that ——"

At this moment three taps were heard upon the panes of the glass door which communicated with the garden—hasty taps, like those of a person in trouble. This time, Savinien did not content himself with merely turning his head. He rose quickly and hastened to the window, leaving his letter unfinished and throwing his pen upon the table.

At the first glance he had discerned behind the glass a woman's profile, and he immediately thought that a woman coming in this direction could only have come from the banker's house. What was her errand? A message; perhaps a reply to the question which he had asked his uncle. The proverb: "Speak of a wolf and you hear it howl" is applicable to letters as well as to conversation.

These thoughts crossed Savinien's mind in less than a second, and he was not greatly surprised, when, on opening the door, he recognised the person who had knocked.

He remembered that Madame Montauron had told him of a means of communication that existed between her park and the little garden of the house in the Rue Rembrandt.

"You, madame?" he exclaimed, standing aside to let her pass.

"You are alone, are you not?" said she, in a low voice.

"Yes, certainly, and I am not expecting any one, but are you not afraid that your husband——"

"My husband," interrupted Madame Montauron, "is not at home. He has just left me and I shall not see him to-night."

"But your servants may see you."

"I can go and come without meeting them. There is a staircase which leads straight to my room from the park, and of which I alone have the key as well as that of the gate which separates our garden from yours. The door-keeper here has his lodging on the other side of the house near the courtyard, and to return home I can take the way I came by."

While Madame Montauron was speaking, Viscount d'Amaulis, somewhat reassured, carefully closed the glass door, and drew the curtain. This was a wise precaution, indeed, for the light of his lamp could be seen from a distance, and any one who had stealthily approached might have easily seen and recognised the banker's wife through the panes of glass. She had seated herself without being asked, and did not wait to be questioned.

"Forgive me," she began, "forgive me for having again recourse to you; this shall be the last time. The danger I am in is as great, greater, perhaps, than that in which I found myself on the day when you saved me, but at least you will not be obliged to expose yourself to peril in order to rid me of it, or to compromise yourself either."

Savinien bowed without replying. This opening left him indifferent. He thought it quite enough to have already compromised himself, and that it was time for his part as a saviour to come to an end. However, he could scarcely refuse to complete his work of charity, but, before making any promise, he wished to know the nature of the service which the lady was about to ask of him. He wished also to find out whether she had the intention of being frank, and was telling him the exact truth, There had been enough mystery and equivocal behaviour. If Madame Montauron had confidence in him she would certainly confide to him her position respecting the foreigner of the hotel in the Rue du Helder, and the nature of the contents of the famous casket which played so important a part in this complicated intrigue.

"You cannot have forgotten," she said, with a display of emotion, "the conversation which we had together in the conservatory at my house, and which my husband interrupted."

"No, madame," replied Savinien, "and since then, I have been hoping that you would let me know what you expect of me. I could not act without seeing you again; and receiving no communication from you, I thought that to-morrow evening, at your house, where I intend calling, you would instruct me as to the casket."

"To-morrow evening it will be too late. It is on account of that I have come."

"Too late?" repeated the viscount in an interrogative tone.

"Yes, I must have my casket to-morrow in the course of the day. If I do not have it, my husband will entertain no further doubt but what I placed it in your hands."

"Why should he know that any better to-morrow than to-day or yesterday? How has the situation changed? Has Monsieur Montauron any suspicions?"

"I thought not, an hour ago. Now, I am sure that Monsieur Bouret's absurd talk has aroused his mistrust. You were there when that detestable man minutely described the steel box which you deposited at the Provincial Bank."

"I remember that, and it seemed to me that he might well have tained from such indiscretion. His business ought to be to keep his tomers' secrets."

"He even went so far as to mention the number of the compartment ed by you. Did he do so maliciously? I shouldn't be surprised at it, he wishes me no good. However, be that as it may, Monsieur ntauron did not lose a word of what he said."

"Then did Monsieur Montauron recognise the casket by the description ich his partner gave in his presence?"

"Perhaps. Monsieur Montauron must have seen this casket which onged to me before I was married, and he cannot have forgotten that woman whom he followed to the hotel in the Rue du Helder had an ect of similar dimensions in her hand."

"That is very likely," muttered Savinien d'Amaulis, with a gesture of ent. "It seems to me, however, that if this idea had come into his id he would not have stopped at that: for he had only to ask you on ne pretext or other to show him this casket."

"He has not asked that. He has even refrained from coming into my ms since your visit. I flattered myself that he had paid no attention Monsieur Bouret's tattle, and I thought that to-morrow at the reception ich you have promised to attend, I should be able to tell you how to urn me this unlucky casket without any danger either to yourself me. But now I cannot deceive myself as to the frame of mind in which husband finds himself since Monsieur Bouret's indiscreet remarks."

"What has happened?"

"Just now, before going out, Monsieur Montauron, who had dined ne with me, proposed a walk in the garden. I preferred sitting under verandah facing this house. The windows of your rooms are visible m there. He sent away the servants so we were alone. He took rantage of this opportunity to speak of a subject which he usually never ers to. He talked of our marriage, our first meeting twelve years ago. spoke in a tone of affection, almost a sentimental one, which surprised me, this is not habitual with him. Then he spoke of your uncle and of you. is was natural enough, but he insisted in a peculiar manner upon my roducing to you a young girl who would suit you as a wife, at least so says."

"I told him only the other day," said Savinien, "that I had not come Paris to be married. I am surprised that he should hold on to this ject."

"It seemed to me that he spoke of it so as to find out my opinion, and o to lead up to the remark that this marriage would be an excellent way withdraw you from an intrigue in which you were engaged."

"An intrigue?" ejaculated Viscount d'Amaulis in surprise.

"Yes, an intrigue with a woman. It was then that he opened a more ect attack. It was then that he said that the casket must contain some ers from this woman, who was without doubt married. Did he say s to try me? Did he say this to entrap me? Did he think that I should w some emotion? I thought that for a moment, but I had no difficulty remaining calm, for his suspicions all tended to error, and I answered so o remove them. Then he announced to me that you would doubtless n remove the casket—you see he returns to that subject constantly hat you were no longer at a hotel, and that, having taken apartments ere the correspondence of this woman would be as safe as in the

vaults of the Provincial Bank, you would not fail to secure possession of it again at an early day."

"It is strange that he should trouble himself so much about me," said Savinien, "but that by no means proves, madame, that he has guessed the truth. He knows very well that I was not acquainted with you before coming to Paris; he cannot, therefore, think that these letters are yours."

"He believes that the casket belongs to me, and this is what he has devised in order to find out whether he is mistaken or not. You know that every Friday we receive people, men only. I do not dress on such evenings as if I were going to a ball. But on leaving me my husband said to me in a tone which admitted of no reply: 'I wish that you would put on all your diamonds to-morrow evening; remember, all of them.' He said this because he knows that I keep them in a jewel-box similar to that described to him by Monsieur Bouret."

"Your diamonds!" exclaimed Viscount d'Amaulis; "were you taking your diamonds to the foreigner who resided over my room at the hotel?"

"To *him!* no!" said Madame Montauron, eagerly.

"To whom, then?" said Savinien. "You asked me to give the casket to him."

"And it contains my diamonds; that is true."

"You admit it! Ah, madame, had I known this, I beg of you to believe that I would have got rid of it at any cost! I would rather have thrown it into the street than have taken charge of it."

"Why?"

"Why?" asked Savinien. "You don't understand, then, that if your husband finds out the truth I shall be disgraced?"

"Disgraced! You?"

"Undoubtedly. A man who receives money from a woman is a scoundrel, and your diamonds are probably worth a great deal of money."

"Two hundred thousand francs."

"You never thought, then, of the frightful situation in which you would place me if this casket should fall into Monsieur Montauron's hands?" asked Savinien.

"You are mistaken, sir. Whatever might happen, my husband would never accuse Viscount d'Amaulis of a disgraceful act."

"He would at least accuse me of being an accomplice in an act which I do not wish to qualify. They do not belong to you, those diamonds, since you are a married woman, any more than your house or your fortune. All of them belong to your husband as much as to you. And the outsider who accepted such a fortune——"

"Stay! who told you that it was intended for the foreigner?"

"Explain your course of conduct, then, if you wish me to excuse it."

"I might reply that you have no right to judge it," said Madame Montauron, with an air which prompted reflection on the part of M. de Trémorin's nephew, "and that you have no right to condemn me before hearing what I have to say; also, that a gentleman never tries to find out a woman's secrets. I prefer, however, to entreat you for your help to save me once more."

"What do you expect of me?"

"Nothing but what is very easy. I came to tell you that my husband requires that I shall put on all my diamonds to-morrow. If he exacts this, it is because he suspects me of having disposed of them, for he never busies himself about my attire, and I have not worn them a dozen times

since we were married. I must, however, tell you that these diamonds are my own personal property. I found them in my *trousseau* as a bridal present, and Monsieur Montauron has often told me to do as I pleased with them."

"He did not foresee the use to which you would apply them," said Savinien, coldly.

"No, sir; but I have always known that a day would come when I should be forced to part with them, and if you knew for what purpose I intended to turn them into money, you would not blame me. I meant to sell them unknown to my husband, I confess it, and in order that they should not appear to have been sold, I intended replacing them by false stones. Now-a-days, false stones are made to imitate real ones to perfection, and I had only to confide my jewels for a few days to a skilful workman, to have similar ones made. Time was wanting to carry out this plan. I was upset by an unexpected event. I did not, I could not, hesitate. You know what I did, and by what fatality the casket which I was compelled to leave with you is now in the vaults of the Provincial Bank. All is not lost, however, since you can withdraw it, and I have come to ask you to restore it to me."

"I am ready to do what is necessary. I will go to-morrow to the bank and take back the casket which I deposited there. I think that there will be no difficulty about the matter, and if you will tell me how to transmit the casket to you, I——'

"A woman who has been with me from my childhood, and who has always taken care of me, will be with you to-morrow at three o'clock. Her name is Brigitte, and in order that you may be sure of her identity, she will bring a letter from me. You may give the casket to her."

"Very well!" exclaimed Savinien, happy to be rid of his perplexity on such easy terms. "Rely upon me, madame."

"I thank you, sir," said Madame Montauron, suppressing her emotion. "I expected no less from you, and I hope that I shall soon be able to prove to you that your uncle would approve of your helping me in the frightful position in which I find myself. The hour has not come for speaking to you of my past. When you know it you will perhaps absolve me. But at this moment let me warn you of a danger which you have not perhaps thought of in proposing to go to take out the casket. Don't you fear that on presenting yourself at the Provincial Bank, Monsieur Bouret may come forward?"

"No, madame. It was altogether unusual for him to go with me himself, as he did, when I became a depositor. But, as a general rule, a clerk waits upon the subscribers and goes with them to the entrance of the vaults into which they descend alone. They only meet a watchman there who does not busy himself as to what they do."

"Ah! you reassure me, sir! I feared some fresh indiscretion on the part of this man whose idle talk aroused my husband's suspicions. To-morrow, then, at three o'clock."

"I shall wait for your messenger, and she shall not return to you empty-handed, for I will go to the Provincial Bank in the morning."

"Yes, in the morning; my husband never goes there then," said Madame Montauron, in a low tone, evidently answering an alarming question which had arisen in her own mind.

Savinien was silent. He hoped that the interview was about to end, and he was not sorry, for, do what he could, he felt ill at ease. The

presence of Madame Montauron troubled him to such a degree that he was afraid to look at her, or to allow himself to admire her too much. He also remembered that their first private interview had been broken in upon in a disagreeable manner. The situation had certainly changed since the scene in the Rue du Helder, but if M. Montauron had again begun to suspect his wife, he must also suspect Viscount d'Amaulis, and there was nothing to prove that he would not be tempted to watch them both.

The road which the lady had taken to reach Savinien's rooms might also be taken by him to follow her, and it would then be the beginning of a worse scene than at the hotel, for in the Rue Rembrandt the house was his own property. There was no help to be looked for in such a case from an obliging hotel-keeper, no possible flight by a secret door, since the fugitive would be obliged to pass out, under such circumstances, in sight of a door-keeper in her husband's employ. All this was far from reassuring.

"Ah! sir," said Madame Montauron, after a somewhat long pause, "I assure you that you shall one day know—soon, perhaps—why I wish again to see the person who lodged in the hotel with you."

"You don't imagine that I shall help you to do so?" asked Savinien, astonished and shocked by this return to facts which, for the sake of Madame Montauron's honour, he would have been glad to forget.

"You told me that this person was still in Paris—that you had met him," she said, "and my husband told me this evening that a foreigner, who is a member of a club into which you have been admitted, had won money from you at cards. Monsieur Montauron was told of this by Monsieur Bouret. He does not know this foreigner, but he knows his name."

"He alludes, no doubt, to Count Aparanda," interrupted Savinien, impatiently. "He's a member, in fact, of the same club as I belong to, and I have lost a large amount at cards to him. But I have no wish to know him apart from that."

"You may at least know where he now resides?"

Viscount d'Amaulis gave a significant shrug, and was silent. It was as much as to say: "What do you take me for, to ask me like that for your lover's address?"

Madame Montauron understood him. "Pardon me, sir," said she, with emotion. "I have wounded your pride, and I feel that I must have done so. But I suffer such anguish that you will be more indulgent, I am sure, when you know why I wish to see Count Aparanda again. I will tell you why—I will tell you the painful story of my life; and if, after having heard it, you still doubt my sincerity, Monsieur de Trémorin, your uncle, will assure you that I have not deceived you. I was the daughter of his most intimate friend, and but twenty years of age when he resolved to save me from the abyss into which I had fallen."

Madame Montauron paused, perceiving that Savinien was not paying attention to her. Indeed he was listening to sounds which seemed to come from the hall. Some one was walking, or rather stamping about, and speaking loudly at the front door of the rooms. "Do you hear?" asked Savinien.

Madame Montauron did not reply. She was listening, and her pallor was perceptible.

"If it were your husband," said the viscount, "but it seems to me that I hear several voices—your husband would be alone—unless——"

"He would not have come this way," faltered the lady.

Yvonne's cousin tried to calm his own mind, but failed to do so. A terrible thought disturbed him. M. Montauron might have watched his wife, who believed him to have gone away, have seen her open the gate, and, perhaps, have brought a police officer with him to bear witness as to her guilt. The poor viscount already foresaw all the results of such a scandalous occurrence.

"There are at least three persons," thought he, "the husband, the officer, and the doorkeeper, whom they have called upon to help them. I am only surprised that they should make so much noise. When people are about to surprise others they don't talk so loud."

"It seems to me that there is a woman," said Madame Montauron.

"A woman? Impossible!—still—that piercing voice, which rises above all the rest, would seem——"

"She is laughing loudly," interrupted Madame Montauron.

"That is true, and it reassures me—it isn't you whom they are looking for. It is undoubtedly some people who have been dining gaily."

"They would not stop before your door, however; and, besides, the house has none but quiet married couples living in it."

"That is no reason why—but stay!—they are quiet now. Their steps grow more distant," said Savinien, in a lower tone, as, in order to hear more distinctly, he partly opened the door of the ante-room.

"They would seem to be directing themselves towards the garden, the mail ends there."

A loud ring at the bell curtailed the dialogue. This time there was no room for doubt. It was indeed Viscount d'Amaulis whom these intruders wished to see at this late hour.

"Fear nothing," said he. "I shall not open the door."

There came a louder ring, and then a very deep male voice articulated the following appeal: "Savinien, open the door, my dear friend. I know that you are at home."

Savinien made an angry gesture, but his brow cleared. He had recognised the voice, and knew whom he had to deal with.

"Don't be alarmed, madame," said he, in a whisper. "Monsieur Montauron has nothing to do with this intrusion."

"Who is it?" asked the lady, somewhat less terrified.

"An old college chum of mine, George Fougeray."

"Good heavens! He knows my husband, and he knows me! What has he come here for? Who knows but that he is aware that I am here?"

"How could that be? I didn't know myself that you were coming."

"What does he want?"

"I presume that he is intoxicated, and wants a companion to join him in finishing his night in the same way that he has begun it, but he won't get me to join him."

"I warn you that we shall not stir from here till you open the door," resumed the voice. "We shall sleep, if necessary, on the hall floor."

"Door! if you please!" cried another rioter, imitating the vexed voice of some coachman driving his master home late at night, and calling out to the doorkeeper from his seat on the box.

"Savinien! Savinien!" yelped the woman at this moment.

"These wretches will end by rousing the whole house," murmured the viscount. He was in consternation, and at a loss what to do.

"You will not succeed in getting rid of them," said Madame Mon-

tauron, less anxious than he, as she no longer feared a repetition of the scene at the Rue du Helder hotel. "It would be better for you to receive them when I have gone. I can return home through the park without being seen by them."

"Yes; that is, I think, the only way to escape them. It is only necessary to open the glass door which overlooks the garden. I will close it again before they come in, and they will see nothing."

"Answer them now, and hold a parley with them through the door to detain them while I run off."

The bell was rung again with incredible violence, and the outrageous disturbance did not cease for a moment.

"Who are you? What do you want?" cried Savinien, loud enough for the ringers to hear him.

"Good night, sir, to-morrow at three o'clock Brigitte will come to you," said Madame Montauron in a whisper, going to the glass door.

"You may rely upon my placing the casket in her hands; but get away, madame, as fast as you can."

"Don't play the innocent," answered George Fougeray from outside. "You know my voice very well, and I have friends of both sexes with me, who have come to see you, and whom you will be charmed to see. Open the door; you won't regret it. We have come to take you to play a game that will amuse you."

"Go to the deuce with your game! I am half dead with sleep, and I wish to be quiet. It is bad enough to have disturbed me just as I was going to bed."

"That is no reason why you should leave us at the door. Open, I say! You can sleep if you like, and we will rock the cradle."

"Thank you; I don't require rocking. Go to bed yourselves! It is the best thing you can do, as you are all as drunk as fools."

While thus replying, in order to gain time, Savinien watched Madame Montauron as she crossed the smoking-room, she had now only to draw back the curtains and open the glass-door. Suddenly, however, he saw her recoil, and return to him with a terrified face. "Some one tapped upon the glass," said she, in a faint tone, "I am lost! there is some one in the garden."

For an instant the viscount thought that a fresh peril had arisen, and that M. Montauron was about to appear to cut off his wife's retreat. But George began to howl out: "You are surrounded, my lad! I have placed a sentry under your windows. So now don't attempt to escape that way!"

"It is one of those good-for-nothing fellows who tapped," said Savinien. "I was afraid of something worse."

"So was I," faltered Madame Montauron, "but you cannot rid yourself of them. What shall we do, in the name of Heaven?"

"Go into my room and shut yourself in while I receive them," answered the viscount in despair. "It is the only way to end it."

"You answer for it that they shall not see me?"

"They shall not go beyond the smoking-room, and won't remain long. I undertake to turn them out, and I will have a plain talk with Monsieur Fougeray for bringing them here."

"Come, Savinien, surrender, my lad," resumed George in a laughing tone; "we shall not raise the siege, and I defy you to run the blockade. The hemming-in is a complete success. Capitulate, my friend! Our terms will not be hard."

"I rely on you," said Madame Montauron, "and I entreat you to shorten my sufferings."

"I promise you, madame, that I will soon set you free," replied the viscount, who stood ready to cross the ante-room and accost the enemy as soon as the impudent woman who he was again obliged to protect should be safely concealed. He saw her enter the sleeping-room, and heard her lock the door. As soon as the slight noise made by the gliding catch announced that this was done, he began once more to abuse the intruders before opening the door to them. He wished to appear to have yielded after mature reflection.

"You are really determined to come in?" said he, walking towards the door; "you wish to come into my rooms?"

"I should think we did, indeed," replied the woman.

"I warn you that you will have a cold reception, and that I will not allow you to settle down here to continue acting in this way."

"Don't be alarmed; we don't intend to stay all night," replied George.

"I trust not," answered the viscount. And thinking that he had said all that was necessary, he opened the door. The gas was not extinguished till midnight in the well kept house in which he resided, so there was still a light in the hall. The first face that Savinien d'Amaulis caught sight of was that of the fair Anita, who was not performing that night, the new play at the "Varietes," having proved a dead failure, and having been withdrawn.

"Viscount of my heart," she abruptly said, "you have made me play a nice part, but I forgive you, as I have rightly guessed that there was a woman here. Oh don't deny it! It is the only thing that could excuse your delay in opening your door for us."

"You are crazy," answered Savinien, angrily.

"We came to take you away," began George Fougeray, pushing Anita into the room.

Two gentlemen followed. They had supped with the Viscount d'Amaulis on the night of his arrival in Paris, and were well-bred men, to a certain extent, one of them being more or less an *attaché* to an embassy. The other was a Russian who was eagerly greeted as a prince at restaurants of a fashionable kind, and the gentleman from Brittany liked him fairly well. The appearance of this rear-guard changed Savinien's ideas. He would not have hesitated to express his annoyance most fully to George and the girl who had entered before him, but he saw that it would be an awkward thing to treat in too serious a manner a farce in which two men of the world had made the mistake of taking part. In the beautiful language of the age of chivalry they might have answered: "Among knights there are such free manners as these." And, after all, there was nothing to be said, especially against them. They had evidently been induced to take part in this ridiculous expedition by George Fougeray or by Anita. Besides, Savinien was no longer anxious. However ready George might be to start anything of the kind, he was not a man to assemble a lot of people together to surprise a woman of society at the house of one of his intimate friends. The gay party were certainly far from thinking of Madame Montauron. It was necessary, now, to find out what these inconvenient revellers—not badly intentioned—really wanted, and to get rid of them as soon as might be. The *attaché*, whose name was Louis de Boisguérin, excused himself very cleverly for having yielded to his friend Fougeray's urging; and the Russian, who was called Constantine

Glébof, uttered no end of confused phrases about "little game" and "big game."

Savinien kept a smile upon his face, and assured them that he was glad to see them. But he was about to ask an explanation of Fougeray, when the giddy Anita took up the reply. "You have hidden her, haven't you, my boy?" said she, looking about in every corner, as though she expected to find a woman hidden in a closet or under an arm-chair.

"Ah! that is too much!" cried the viscount, in anger, and he added harshly, "I beg you to drop the subject and behave yourself."

"Why? because I speak familiarly to you? Very well, viscount, I, will obey; but that does not alter the case. We interrupted a private talk, I am sure of it!"

"Well, what of it?" said George, judging fit to put himself forward. "Isn't our friend free to receive evening visits? Instead of talking to him of what doesn't concern you, you had better tell him what we propose to do, as the matter was arranged by you."

"Tell him yourself," said Anita, "I shall look at the furniture and rooms while you are about it. It is really very pretty here, thanks to me, as the gentleman didn't care to have the furniture; and I know some one who would take it off his hands and give him three thousand francs profit. Ah! there is his correspondence," added the blonde, catching sight, upon the table, of Savinien's letter to M. de Trémorin.

"Stop where you are!" cried Fougeray, coming forward to prevent an unpardonable act of indiscretion.

"Did you suppose that I was going to read it? I was not brought up at the convent of the Sacred Heart, but I know how to behave myself. I shall sit down on this sofa and I won't open my lips while we are here, so that you may not accuse me of meddling with your friend's love affairs again. But give me a cigarette to help me to endure the fine speech you are going to make to him."

She acted as she said. She lighted at Savinien's lamp a cigarette handed to her by George, and extended herself upon a Turkish divan, which, as fate would have it, was placed quite close to the door of the bed-room.

Savinien, out of patience, was thinking of the agony endured by the unfortunate woman who was only protected by a slight partition from Anita's impertinence, and who from the apartment to which she had fled must hear every word articulated in the smoking-room.

"Tell me," said George to his friend, "where have you been these last two days? No one has seen you at the club, and I went to look for you at all the restaurants which a man who has a nice little pile of thousand franc notes in his desk would be likely to patronise."

"I am at liberty to dine where I please, and to spend my evenings elsewhere than at your club," replied Savinien, moodily.

"You are, indeed, my dear fellow, but it is quite natural that your friends should regret your absence and be uneasy about you. Twenty people have asked after you, and among them, these two gentlemen whom I met just now at the Champs-Elysées circus. As I could tell them nothing as to what had become of you, Anita, who was with them, had an idea."

"My idea was a bad one," exclaimed the blonde. "If I had foreseen how we should be received, I beg of you to believe that I should have taken you home with me, instead of coming to the Rue Rembrandt."

"Then it is to this young lady that I am indebted for your visit?" said Savinien, with a constrained smile.

"This is what happened: We were dying to have a game at cards, all of us, including Anita, who, as you know, is not performing, and as she could not go to the club, she kindly offered us a game and supper at her house. The proposal was received with enthusiasm. We recruited, on the spot, two or three heavy players and several little feminine friends of Anita's, who have promised to be at her house exactly as twelve o'clock strikes. We shall sup after our game, and I'll answer for it we shall have a gay time. I thought that you would willingly join us, and that we should perhaps find you at home, as you did not appear to be anywhere else. The motion was unanimously carried. Anita took me in her victoria. Boisguérin got into Glébof's brougham, and here we are!"

"Fongeray forgets that Glébof and I were a little bit excited," added the *attaché*. "We had drunk four bottles of Arbois at dinner. I tell you that, my dear sir, as an excuse for our noisy invasion. I went so far as to tap on your window, and I beg you to overlook that college boy's freak."

"It was very amusing," stammered Viscount d'Amaulis, who wished to appear to take the joke in good part, in order that all might end the sooner.

"Then you will come with us?" said George.

"No. I thank you, gentlemen, for having thought of inviting me, but——"

"But what? You had not gone to bed, as you said you had, when we rang, since you are still fully dressed. You have only to take your hat and cane. Anita's house is but two steps from here. I will walk there with you."

"It is impossible. I have letters to write."

"To your relations in Brittany? You have plenty of time for that, the mail does not go till to-morrow evening. Eighteen hours before you is more than you need, it seems to me, to write all your letters."

"I am tired, and I don't care to be up all night."

"Ah! viscount! viscount!" cried Anita, resuming the liveliness that suited her so well, "how wrong you would be to refuse! You don't know what you would lose. I told two of my lady friends, who are dying to meet you, that I expected a gentleman from Brittany. They will ask what has become of you, and I should have to tell them the truth, as they would never be satisfied with a put-off."

"You can tell them, my dear, that I am longing for sleep."

"No, no! I shall tell them that you were not alone, and that to their company you prefer that of a person whom we intruded upon, and who must be having a very unpleasant time of it just now."

"I tell you again that you are mistaken."

"Of course you are," said George, addressing the blonde. "If our friend were making love to any one he would not have begun a letter to his uncle."

"My dear friend," said the Russian, drawling out his words, "you are wrong to miss this game. There is a pile of cash to win. The Swede has agreed to hold out as long as we like."

"The Swede! What Swede?" asked Savinien, eagerly.

"My children, I have another idea - that makes two this evening," cried the fair Anita, not hesitating to take the words out of Glébof's mouth just as he was about to mention the name of the fine player to whom

he alluded. "Since Viscount d'Amaulis will not come to my house, why shouldn't we have our entertainment here? He only took possession here this evening. It seems to me that this is an excellent chance for a house-warming. Oh, don't be afraid, Glébof, you shall have your baccarat all the same! The Swedish count will go to my house at about eleven. My maid will send him here, as well as the supper which I ordered at the Café Anglais as we passed by."

"How you talk, my girl!" cried George. "Do you imagine that the Scandinavian lord is at your orders?"

"Every one who makes love to me is at my orders," replied Anita, majestically.

"Everbody knows that he is making love to you, but I don't believe that he will agree to bring his bank and his person to the rooms of our friend Savinien, who has not invited him and scarcely knows him. I doubt it the more as he is by no means a pleasant person, this Count Aparanda. He is as stiff as a pole, and scarcely polite."

"He is not at all polite," said Glébof. "I think, however, that he would willingly come here if he thought he could find some heavy players."

"Be that as it may," said M. de Boisgnérin; "it is best to know before sending for him whether the new arrangement would suit Monsieur d'Amaulis."

"If the Swede doesn't suit him, we will do without the Swede," answered the blonde. "I will send word to that gentleman that I shall not be at home any more, and he may then go and play cards wherever he pleases. Albine and Lucie will come, and we seven will be quite as many as need be. Here is a table that looks as though it were made expressly for baccarat. As for the supper, there is a dining-room, and we can light it up as brightly as though it were day-time. Everything will be brought from the Café Anglais!"

"What do you say, Savinien?" asked George Fougeray.

Savinien was cursing Anita and her plans, which placed him in such cruel embarrassment. Nothing of all this suited him, but he saw that he would be obliged to choose one of the two proposals. He did not wish to have this foreigner brought unceasingly in his way by the chances of Parisian life. The best way to avoid him was not to go to Anita's house, for it was scarcely likely that the count would humour the misplaced whim of the crazy creature, and she on her side was quite ready to dispense with his society if M. d'Amaulis was unwilling to receive him.

On the other hand, however, how could he refuse to accompany her, now that she had declared her resolution to remain all night with her party in his rooms? This would be still worse, for Madame Montauiron, blockaded in the bed-room, would thus be condemned to remain, who could say how long? When a warmly-contested game is being played, no one can tell when it will end. It ends as fate pleases, sometimes not until the morrow, or the day after that morrow. Gamblers have been known to hold their cards during sixty hours, and to ruin the banker's wife for ever it would suffice that baccarat should last till dawn, for she could not enter her house by daylight, or escape while the actress was still in the rooms.

To cross the garden it was necessary to walk through the smoking-room, where the guests were. The bed-room had a window, but it was some height above the ground, and the leap would have been dangerous. Besides, it was necessary to consider that a noise would be made by opening the

window. The poor woman's situation was truly intolerable, for in her dark hiding place everything could be heard. The talkers spoke very loud, and the insupportable Anita had placed herself close to the bed room door, so that all her disjointed gabble reached Madame Montauron's ears. And, as if by excess of hatefulness, the blonde and her friends were now talking of a man who was the subject of the saddest thoughts on the part of the lady of the casket.

George Fougeray had just pronounced the name of Count Aparanda, and a discussion was going on as to whether it was best to send for him or to let him know by message that the game of cards was postponed.

Savinien asked himself what at this moment could be the mental state of the imprudent woman who had again staked her reputation in the effort to regain possession of her casket. It was certain that she must hope that this foreigner, who was so mysteriously mixed up in her life, would not be brought into one of the rooms where she was concealed, and if she had ever loved him, even admitting that she loved him no more, it would be heartrending to her to be present, an invisible witness of a gay meeting at which he would be the attraction to the expected women.

Madame Montauron wished to see him again, no doubt; she had said so, and as the viscount was not disposed to assist her in doing so she had expressed a wish to know where he lived. The idea suddenly struck Savinien that if, as he presumed, she was listening to the conversation, she must be hoping that he would accept the invitation to go to Anita's house to play and take supper. She must wish him to take this determination not only because the retreat of the invaders would enable her to fly, but because she also hoped that, touched by her prayer, he would consent to profit by the opportunity to ascertain the address and daily habits of Count Aparanda.

The noisy arrival of the importunate troop of merrymakers had interrupted the narrative which she had begun of her youth's misfortunes, but she had said enough to lead Savinien to think that she was not undeserving of interest. Had she not mentioned Monsieur de Tremorin's name? Had she not spoken of the baron as of a friend who had come to her rescue after an error, the nature of which she had not had time to tell, but which must have been a serious misfortune, since after so many years she was still suffering from its consequences?

All these thoughts passed through the mind of Yvonne's cousin in a few seconds, and when the black-eyed blonde again appealed to him, he was almost on the point of sacrificing his night's rest to compel the intruders to leave his house. By consenting to go to Anita's house he would get this creature and her followers out of the rooms, and enable Madame Montauron to escape during his absence; and, besides, it would be the most feasible plan for leading the party to believe that there was no one in his rooms.

"Well, what shall I do to enable you to enjoy yourself, oh! you most undecided of viscounts?" asked the actress. "Shall I send my coachman to tell my servants that we will sup here, or will you deign to honour by your august presence the miserable dwelling of your very humble servant? I await your reply, my lord, and your will shall be law; but I declare that your choice goes no further, either here or at my house! Don't hope to get out of it in any other way. I hold you, and I shall not let you go."

"Well, then, I yield," answered Viscount d'Amaulis, in as careless a tone as he could assume.

"Bravo! we shall sup here!"

"No, you would be ill at ease, and I don't wish to trouble your guests to come here. Besides, I wish to see your palace."

"Excellent! You are very kind, and you shall be rewarded. I predict for you no end of good luck at cards. You will beggar the Swede."

"And it will be a good deed," answered Glébof, who, being a Russian, did not fancy Swedes.

"He owes you your revenge," insisted M. de Boisguérin.

"I knew that he would come," said George Fougeray. "Two days o virtuous seclusion are enough, my lad! There is a time for everything. Come, are you ready?"

Anita had risen, and the gentlemen were waiting for her to lead the way. Savinien pretended to look for his overcoat and hat, which were in the ante-room. He was not yet absolutely resolved to go off. He was thinking of his prisoner, and wondered whether she had preserved enough coolness to understand the situation, and to realise that although he abandoned it, it was in reality to save her.

Would she have enough nerve to escape without his help. Escape seemed by no means difficult. Madame Montauron knew the passage through the garden, and had only to leave the room as soon as there was no longer any one there. Savinien, after some further hesitation, concluded that she was fully able to get out of the difficulty alone, and he announced that he was ready to go off with the assembled party.

"Indeed I shall not be sorry," he said aloud, so that Madame Montauron might hear him, "to win back the money that this Count Aparanda won from me the other evening at the club, and as I do not care to receive him at my house, I thank you for having called here for me."

"The question is whether you will thank us after the game of cards is played," said Glébof; "the count is very lucky at play."

"And now, to the Tower of Nesle!" quoted the actress, seizing hold of the viscount's arm, and he suffered himself to be led away without even turning his head in the direction of the bed-room.

"You see that our friend had no woman in his apartments," said George Fougeray, laughing.

"I hope," thought Savinien, "that there will be no woman there when I return, and, indeed, that she will never come here again."

VII.

Savinien, since his arrival in Paris, had passed from one surprise to another, and that which he experienced on entering Anita's house surpassed many a previous one of them. He knew very well that now-a-days actresses and "irregulars" are often much better lodged than more deserving women, and that many of them own landed property. But he imagined that the landed property of this frivolous princess of the footlights must be a sort of sugar-plum box, a quilted nest, so to speak, or what was formerly called "a folly;" that is to say, a small house run up in some retired quarter to hide the love affairs of some nobleman. However, he saw a superb mansion, facing a wide boulevard in the heart of Paris—a house which would not have appeared insignificant even beside that belonging to M. Montauron, although it was less vast and not, like his

erected between a princely court and an almost regal park. The interior corresponded with the promises held out by the exterior. The tasteful luxury began in the vestibule, which was full of exotics. The walls of the staircase, which was as wide as that of some museum, were lined with pictures of undoubted value. There was a library, two dining-rooms, one for winter and one for summer, reception-rooms and boudoirs hung with silk, with a dressing-room and a bath-room which were spoken of as wonders in Boulevardian society.

Needless to say, moreover, that there were stables and a coach-house, servants in livery, and a stylishly-attired maid; indeed, all the accesories required in the establishment of a pretty woman of good taste who has plenty of money to spend.

Anita had good sense enough to take no notice of the astonishment which she did not fail to perceive on the face of her provincial guest, but she took great pleasure in showing him all her splendours, from her picture gallery to her jewel boxes. George Fougeray assisted her in making his friend acquainted with refinements of life which proved entirely new to the gentleman from Brittany. The viscount was indeed so absorbed in the contemplation of Anita's luxurious surroundings that he soon forgot Madame Montauron and the peril she was in, or, if he remembered her, it was only to conclude that she had returned to her husband's house. It is true, moreover, that Anita's entertainment turned out quite differently to what either she or her guests had calculated. They had intended arranging a game at cards, but to make up a game worth mentioning a heavy player must hold the bank.

Now, Count Aparanda had not yet appeared, and none of the players present cared to take the often lucrative, but always perilous, place of dealer against all the others. George Fougeray himself was the first to propose to substitute a lively chat for baccarat until supper-time. The Russian and the *attaché* agreed with the suggestion, and Anita also, so that Savinien guessed that this gay party had designs upon the Swede's purse, and had met with the hope of emptying it. "Here as elsewhere," thought Yvonne's cousin, "the Golden Pig is the object of adoration, as in my dream."

Albine and Lucie, Anita's friends, had objected at first. They would have been content to win a few louis from the gentlemen present, but the latter did not appear disposed to part with any coin, and so, fearing to be taken for needy adventuresses, the two young women abstained from insisting upon playing.

Lucie was a serious-looking brunette with very high-set eyebrows, which gave her a look of perpetual surprise; while Albine was a blonde with a tip-tilted nose, who laughed every moment to display her teeth. Both resembled the pen-portraits that Savinien had read of them in those newspapers which indulge in descriptions of the petty actresses and "irregulars" of Paris and their surroundings. They interested him but little.

Anita, however, attracted him as an unsolved problem fascinates a mathematician, and he allowed himself to study her more attentively than an engaged man should have done. The strange creature well knew how, when it suited her, to affect the speech and manner of a woman of good birth. She treated him with marked courtesy, after having, as she phrased it, "talked slang" to him at times when it had suited her to show herself to be no better than she was.

Now that she devoted herself to him with many engaging smiles, and assumed the manners of a great lady so well that she might really have been taken for one, he forgave her for having made game of him at the auction rooms, and invaded his bachelor apartment. Supper completed his reconciliation with the ideas of the period, and it would not have required any great effort to have brought him to the point of confessing that the worship of the idol he so greatly despised has, after all, its merits. He was new, indeed, to the choice elegances of the life of the princesses of the footlights, and the supper-service and the display of flowers astonished him greatly.

The wines and viands all came from the Café Anglais, but the china was Dresden, the glasses were crystal, flecked with gold spots, the napkins were of Russian linen, and the table-cloth of Chinese satin, woven with coloured flowers, and evidently made to order purposely for Anita. The table was decked, moreover, with a great display of flowers, but there was no massive silver-plate, as at a provincial dinner given to show off wealth and to prove that it is not newly acquired; still, Anita had plenty of money to spend.

She had placed Viscount d'Amaulis on her right; she made every effort to captivate him, and succeeded. The beauty of the black-eyed blonde, the gay chat of the guests, the fine wines from the celebrated cellar of the restaurant in the Rue Marivaux, all combined to intoxicate him, although his head was strong. In Brittany, he had sometimes taken far more wine, but then he had never heard conversation so calculated to upset the brain.

Anita started the conversation, and all sorts of subjects were talked of; high life and high livers, popular actresses and circus-riders, eccentric foreigners and "irregulars." Parisian private life was discussed, scandalous adventures related, everything was known, and everything told.

Savinien, for the first time in his life, saw the back side of life as a play might be seen from the slips. He almost blushed at knowing so much less about such matters than his old college chum. For George Fougeray, however, Paris had no more secrets to be discovered.

It depended upon Savinien himself to become fully acquainted with this Paris in which he was now taking his first steps, and the people about him asked nothing better than to show it to him under all its aspects. He felt that he could soon become an adept and rapidly distance George, who could have no footing in the society which received the last of the Amaulis with open arms. He indeed felt a desire to rush wildly into it, and experienced flashes of vanity, feverish longings, which made him forget his wise determinations, precisely as he had forgotten the letter which he had begun to write to his uncle.

Matters had reached that psychological point when persons say whatever comes into their heads, when a gentleman who had not been invited by the lady of the house, although she was well acquainted with him, was suddenly announced. The guests had some knowledge of him. This unexpected and late arrival was none other than the under-manager of the Provincial Bank, the inevitable financier Bouret, whom Savinien met everywhere, and whose life was divided between business and pleasure. He was received with acclamations.

On such occasions a gay companion always meets with a warm reception, and M. Bouret had the reputation of being a thorough gay liver. He

ad been at one time an intimate friend of Anita's. He was well equainted with Albine and Lucie, he treated George Fougeray with the miliarity that a general shows to a soldier who may become an officer, nd this was by no means the first occasion on which he found himself in oisy company with the Russian and the *attaché*. All liked his gaiety nd easy good humour. Anita remembered him with pleasure, and her wo friends were disposed to like all pleasant and liberal individuals.

Viscount d'Amoulis was the only person who felt no pleasure at sight f Monsieur Montauran's coadjutor. For several days past he could go owhere without encountering him, but he was obliged to put a good face n the matter, and did not show his annoyance.

"You will ask me how it happens I have come here, and how I know hat our dear madcap was giving an entertainment," said the newcomer, fter having shaken hands with every one present. "It is easy to guess. met that tall fellow Pontaumur who was coming from the circus——"

"And he told you that I had made up a game," interrupted Anita. "He was near us when we arranged it near the stables, and he was furious because I didn't invite him. No indeed! He is very tiresome, and, besides, he would have wanted to bring Blanche Taupier with him."

"Oh! horrors, no!" exclaimed Albine and Lucie, who did not like competitors.

"I did not tell him that I intended to invite myself," said Bouret. "I skilfully manœuvred till I got rid of him. Then I went round to my club where I had a stupid time of it, and at two o'clock I told my coachman to drive me to the Boulevard Malesherbes. Have I done wrong?"

"No! no!" eagerly replied the guests of both sexes, in chorus.

"I see that I have come at a good time. Now, I need two bottles of Moet's Brut Imperial to be as merry as you are."

"Drink them, then," said Anita, gravely.

"Thanks. I could drink four without rolling under the table, but one must think of the morrow, you know, and I have three business appointments before twelve."

"Would you like some supper?"

"Oh, no, you have finished, and I think that you must be dying to go at something else. Pontaumur said that you had found a player to make up a bank, a gentleman who has just come from the North Pole, with millions in his pocket. I presume that you mean to win them."

"We are reckoning without our host," said George Fougeray. "The polar individual has thought fit to abstain from appearing."

"He has broken his promise," exclaimed the lady of the house. "and I vow he shall repent of it!"

"You will make him pay dearly for it, and you will do right," replied George, "but we shall have no revenge for his rudeness, as the absence of the capitalist breaks up our game. Unless, indeed, Monsieur Bouret will lay fifty thousand francs on the table," he added, laughing.

"That is a good idea," cried Anita. "Come, Bouret, make up a bank for us: you ought to know how to play banker, as that is your business."

"Not at night-time. I am a banker from nine till five only. What would the shareholders of the Provincial Bank say if they heard I was a baccarat player? Baron de Trémorin would withdraw his confidence from us."

"I shan't be the person to betray you to him," said Savinien, laughing.

"I am sure of that, viscount, and I won't betray you if you take the Swede's place to please these gentlemen. Between ourselves you would do as well, for you are very lucky at ventures. To make a hundred thousand francs the first time one sets foot at the Bourse is a sign of luck, or else I don't know what I am talking about. But, now that I speak of your profits, how do you like my upholsterer?"

"Very much. I was able to move in to-day."

"And he is delightfully lodged," said Anita. "The furniture looks quite fresh, the rooms are pleasant——"

"So you have seen them?" interrupted Bouret. "Bless me! you've lost no time in behaving in a neighbourly fashion to Monsieur d'Amaulis."

"It was all as it should be, my dear sir! Ask Monsieur Fougeray."

"True," replied George, "there were four of us: Boisguérin, Glébof, Anita, and I, and we paid a visit to Savinien, who received us very badly."

"So badly that I thought he had a lady with him," resumed Anita. "He wouldn't come with us at first, but at last we carried him off."

"Oh, I only resisted for form's sake," exclaimed Viscount d'Amaulis, who feared the indiscreet tongue of M. Bouret. "I was alone, as you all know."

"You will allow me to call on you," said the under-manager. "To-morrow I shall have to go and see Monsieur Montauron, in the afternoon, most likely; I know that he is as anxious as I am to see how your ground-floor looks. We have only to pass through his park and your garden, and we will profit by the occasion."

"Don't take the trouble to-morrow," said Savinien, who had not forgotten that Madame Montauron's messenger would call at three o'clock for the casket. "I am going out early in the morning, and shan't return till the evening to dress. I am going to visit Monsieur Montauron."

"True, it will be Friday. Well, as you won't be at home I will put off my visit till another time."

"Gentlemen," said Albine, laughing to show her white teeth, "you are not in the least amusing. Instead of complimenting one another, you would do better to draw lots as to who shall make up a bank. Oh! we don't want to ruin you! A hundred louis, fifty louis, whatever you like, so long as the women win; and it will be all the better for you, for that Count Aparanda would have cleared you all out, I am sure of it."

"She is right," cried George, "and as these ladies want a bank I am ready to make up a small one."

"That's right!" sighed Lucie. "When I do not play after supper I feel ill."

"Then, my children," said Anita, rising, "let us go into the drawing-room. The table is quite ready there for the game."

All the guests rose with her, and Savinien, who had not yet completely lost his head, had the wise thought of profiting by this interval "between the acts" to disappear, English fashion, without taking leave of any one. He did not wish to begin a game which could only interest the women present, and which might, all the same, last till dawn if one of them lost and wished to recover her losses. He preferred to return home to assure himself that Madame Montauron was no longer there, and also to have a little sleep; for he needed rest after all the night's emotions, and must also be ready in the morning to go to the Provincial Bank in search of the famous casket.

But it was written that he should not so easily escape the temptations

Anita's supper-party. While the remaining guests were returning to
e drawing-room, and he was manœuvring to reach the ante-room noise
ssly, M. Bouret, who had remained behind, took his arm familiarly, and
id: "Did you know that this Count Aparanda was your neighbour
efore you moved?"

"Where?" asked the viscount, who knew very well, but did not expect
is question.

"Why you were, without knowing it, in the same hotel as he, and I
ill tell you how I became aware of it. You remember that we recog-
sed him at the auction-rooms from having met him at the gate of our
ults, where he came to deposit a trunk for which he would have had to
y a good deal as overplus fare if he had been going to Sweden."

"Yes—well, what of it?"

"Well, although Fougeray told me his name, I had the curiosity to
ok at the subscription register, and I saw that he had given his address
s No. 9 Rue du Helder,"

"Then I wasn't mistaken," said Savinien. "I did think that I had
en him crossing the hotel courtyard. I fancy that I mentioned it
you."

"True. I remember now. You added that he left with his luggage
a cab."

"He left the house, I am sure. How did he happen to tell your clerk
at he lived there."

"I really cannot say. Perhaps he intended to return there."

"I don't believe it. The proof of this is that he was buying some
rniture at the Rue Drouot sale."

"These foreigners do everything in their own way! Well, if this one
esn't live at the hotel, he must live somewhere, and——"

"I should like to know where," interrupted the viscount.

"Why? Does he owe you any money?" asked M. Bouret, with a laugh.

At this moment a servant entering the drawing-room announced:
Count Aparanda!"

The under-manager of the Provincial Bank had gradually drawn
iscount d'Amaulis towards the folding door of the drawing-room, both
aves of which were open. They could, therefore, without need of ad-
ncing, observe the entrance of the Swedish count, who arrived just at
e moment when he had been given up.

He was received like a man in debt receives the bearer of a letter full
bank-notes. He must have enough money about him to fill everybody's
ckets, and it was well known that he asked nothing better than to hold
e bank. The first ventures he had made in card-playing since his arrival
Paris had been lucky; indeed, since he had been admitted to the
lungers' Club, he had always come off winner. Still, luck changes, and
ust change, by the very nature of things, and every one hoped that it
ould change that night.

Anita herself forgot that she had been abusing the truant, and made
m cordially welcome. She did not, like her friends, so greatly wish to
ake a few louis at baccarat, still she seemed to be desirous of pleasing
er guest.

"What do you think of all this enthusiasm, my dear viscount?" said
ouret, with a mocking laugh. "Just now they were speaking of this
reigner with the utmost scorn. One would have thought that if he had
ared to show his face he would be shown the door, and now they all but

bear him in triumph. The men are shaking hands with him, and the women are almost ready to fall into his arms."

"It is his purse that they are welcoming," replied Savinien.

"Of course. I think he is perfectly well aware of that; for he takes all this homage with a sarcastic dignity, which shows that he is more cunning than any of they are. One would swear that he was saying to himself, 'He laughs longest who laughs last.'"

"That's true, and I wonder that my friend George does not perceive it."

"Oh, Fougeray is able to take care of himself. Besides, he may be thinking of having some business transactions with him at a later date. He would be wrong in that. Foreigners now-a-days wear a coat of mail, as it were, and ill betide any one who looks out for a weak place in it."

"Then you have some suspicions as to this man?"

"Suspicions! No, not more than as to many other gentleman-exotics who swarm about clubs and visit the houses of actresses and 'irregulars.' These birds appear and disappear like swallows, and none know whence they come or whither they go. They don't leave their plumage in Paris, at all events; quite the contrary. So much the worse for the simpletons who have to deal with them."

"That is my opinion also, and I shall take care to have nothing to do with this gentleman. He doesn't look as though he amounted to much."

"You have the more reason to mistrust him, as he has, if I am not mistaken, already fleeced you. But if you care to know his address, this is a good chance. I am going to find it out from him, unless it suits you better to ask it of him yourself."

"No; I know him too little to allow myself to question him. Besides, it was mere curiosity on my part. It seems strange to me that he should give out that he is at the Rue du Helder hotel when he is no longer there. That is all."

"It is, indeed, strange. I must amuse myself by questioning him, if only for the pleasure of embarrassing him, or at least annoying him."

"Whatever you do," said Savinien, eagerly, "be kind enough not to bring me into the matter."

"Don't be alarmed. I will take it all upon myself. Let me speak. We shall have some fun."

"What! are you plotting together?" asked the lady of the house. "Don't you see that we have our banker now? Bouret, you need not worry any more now; and you, viscount, will have a formidable adversary. Let me introduce you both. That surprises you, eh? as I told you the other day at the sale in the Rue Drouot that I did not know Count Aparanda. Learn, however, that we are now old friends. Are we not, count?" concluded Anita, with a captivating look at the Swede, who bowed by way of assent. She now took his hand, stepped aside with him, and they talked apart, while the guests grouped themselves round the card-table so as to lose no more time.

"I have already met this gentleman at the club," said Savinien to Anita, in a low tone.

"True! I had forgotten it," exclaimed the black-eyed blonde. "I remember being told that the count had won some money of you at the Plungers' Club. Well, he now offers you a revenge, and you must accept it. That is as it should be! I must now introduce Bouret."

"Thanks, my dear friend," said the financier. "I had rather intro-

e myself, the more as I have just a little information to ask of this
tleman."
'Of me?" muttered the foreigner, frowning.
'Oh, it is nothing! a mere trifle of which I stand in need as manager
he Provincial Bank."
Savinien, who was observing Count Aparanda, thought that he saw
turn somewhat pale.
'We have already met without your remarking it," resumed Bouret.
'Where, if you please?" asked the foreigner, drily.
'At the entrance of the deposit vaults. One morning at the beginning
his week you came to bring a chest to us. I say 'us,' because I am
er-manager of the establishment, of which my friend Montauron is the
ctor. Your chest was brought in by a porter, who carried it on his
k. You came to the gate just as I was going out."
'I remember now. It seems to me that you were not alone."
'No; I was in the company of Viscount d'Amaulis, who brought us a
osit also, less voluminous than yours, let me say. His was a casket.
rs a chest, but they are side by side in Nos. 918 and 919. You are
ghbours."
Aparanda looked at Bouret and Savinien with a degree of attention
ch showed that the coincidence was not a matter of indifference
im.
"I am delighted to hear it," said he, in a somewhat sarcastic tone.
Will you be kind enough to tell me, however, what this all has to do
h the information you need of me?"
"Ah, yes! In giving your name to the clerk who delivers the sub-
iption tickets you indicated your residence as No. 9 Rue du Helder."
"Certainly. Wasn't this formality necessary?"
"So necessary that we require notification of any change of address.
u understand why. A depositor may die. In that case we apprise
heirs."
"That is all very well, sir. When I change my address I will let you
ow."
"Good; but you have not let us know this time."
"How 'this time?'"
"You are no longer staying at the Rue du Helder."
"What do you know about that?" asked the Swede, abruptly.
"I learned by chance that you are not," replied M. Bouret, without
ding the look on Savinien's face. "Viscount d'Amaulis was in the
ne hotel as you; he left it to-day, and he tells me that you left it before
did."
"Monsieur d'Amaulis really troubles himself too much about my move-
nts, and I should be greatly obliged if he will explain."
"How I came to speak of you," interrupted Savinien, who mentally
nt M. Bouret to Hades, but felt it impossible to recoil now that the
estion was broached, "I will tell you. When I met you at the entrance
the vaults, I recognised you as having seen you that same morning
ossing the courtyard of the hotel where I was staying. You took a
nicle with your luggage. I mentioned the matter to this gentleman
thout attaching the slightest importance to it."
"And I," resumed Bouret, "do not attach any more importance to it
an he does. But when the list of fresh depositors was presented to me
d I saw your name——"

"How did you guess that the name was that of the depositor who was in the vaults when you came down there?" interrupted the Swede.

"Your name is followed by your address, and I knew that Monsieur d'Amaulis lived in the Rue du Helder. I made up my mind at once, and I promised myself that I would ask you to rectify the statement made on our register. I could not write to you, as I did not know your new address, but I thought that I should be likely to meet you somewhere. I did meet you at the auction-rooms, but the place would have been ill-chosen to accost you, and besides, Monsieur Fougeray, who was with me, told me that you had become a member of his club. I then knew where to address you, and I was in no hurry, as it is a mere matter of form. Now that I have mentioned the mistake to be rectified, it will suffice if you send a note to-morrow to the office of the Provincial Bank, a note with ——"

"Oh! it is useless to wait till to-morrow. I am now at the Grand Hôtel," interrupted Count Aparanda. "I did not know whether I could find a room to suit me there, when I came to your banking-house——"

"And so you gave us your old address? That is quite natural. Let us say no more about it, count. I will see that the correction is made."

Savinien, on the contrary, thought that nothing could be less natural; but he now had the address which Madame Montauron so much desired, and he forgave all M. Bouret's babble as it had resulted in enabling him to procure this information.

Anita had listened absently to what to her was most uninteresting conversation. However, she had had the politeness to abstain from interrupting: but when she heard Bouret's conclusion she lost no time in reminding her guests that they were being waited for to play baccarat.

Albine and Lucie had already taken their places, one on the right the other on the left of the chair reserved for the banker. They were now engaged in spreading out upon the table a few louis which they hoped to increase. Glébof, who could not play without drinking—this was a "fetish" for luck—was busy in placing near the chair which he had appropriated a little side-table with various liquors upon it.

Boisguérin was armed with a rake which he was brandishing to see how far it would reach, while waiting till he could use it to rake in the Swede's money. Fougeray was opening the sealed packs of cards which the lady of the house had procured with admirable forethought. All that was wanting was Count Aparanda, detained, to the great annoyance of the would-be players, by the prolonged explanation just given.

The women were muttering complaints, and the men were sending Bouret to the devil for taking up the banker's time.

"I would bet anything that animal is proposing some sort of business transaction to him," grumbled George Fougeray. 'He won't play himself, and he keeps us from playing. There's that simpleton Amaulis keeping the thing up! He must have something to find out about that Swede. I have noticed two or three times already that he was very much interested in the gentleman, and I will find out why before I have done."

"Is this all that you wished to ascertain from me?" said the foreigner, scornfully, looking M. Bouret full in the face.

"There is nothing further," replied the under-manager.

"That is fortunate, and you will allow me to remark that your banking-house does not fulfil what it promises to its depositors."

"How is that? Have you any doubt as to the inviolability of our

ts? You closed your compartment yourself. Your chest is there, and
ody can open it but yourself."
'I daresay; but I thought that secrecy was a part of your programme,
I perceive that you do not consider yourselves bound to keep your
cribers' secrets.
'Yes we do! yes we do! the list of subscribers is known to us alone."
'I beg your pardon! You have just told Monsieur d'Amaulis that I
down upon it. I hasten to add that it is quite indifferent to me, and
I make no secret of having hired one of your compartments to deposit
e valuables; but for the sake of the principle I call attention to the
, that one of the directors of the Provincial Bank speaks of his
omers' business outside of his office. You will admit that this manner
nderstanding their interests has its drawbacks. Monsieur d'Amaulis,
nstance, may not like it any better than myself."
'Why not, sir?" demanded Savinien, abruptly.
'It was at least idle to tell me that you made a deposit on the same
, and side by side with mine. Your affairs are no concern of mine."
'Nor do yours interest me, that is perfectly true; but it matters little
ne that you should know of my relations with the Provincial Bank,"
ied Savinien, who did not speak as he felt.
'If this is a lesson you are attempting to teach me," resumed Bouret,
have but one reply to give you: you are free to remove your chest
ou don't think that it is in safety with us."
'I know that, sir, and I shall soon make use of my freedom to do so,"
ied Count Aparanda, turning his back upon the under-manager.
nita had left the talkers to join the players and calm their impatience.
'At last!" cried she, seeing the foreigner draw near the table, "your
ference is at an end. That is fortunate, indeed! I thought that
ret was giving these gentlemen a lecture on financial administration."
'I am here, my dear madame," said the Swede; "and if I am wanted
ake the bank, I am ready to do so."
'Wanted? I should think so, indeed!" replied Fougeray; "we
lore you to do so! We sigh at your absence. If you had stayed
h longer, Boisguérin would have plunged his rake into his body,
oof would have finished that bottle of Kummel which he has begun
king, and, as he is fearfully far gone already, the effect would have
n disastrous: Lucie would have withered where she stands, and
ine would have torn out her lovely light-brown hair."
'Be still, my dear fellow," said the *attaché*. "You are preventing
nt Aparanda from stating how much money he puts in the bank."
'Say what it shall be yourselves, gentlemen," said the Swede, taking
ession of the seat placed ready for him at the table.
'Is thirty thousand too much?" asked the Russian.
'Certainly not. I won as much at the club the other evening, and I
e the money about me. You will allow me to add a hundred louis to
se these ladies."
'That is as it should be. The count is a well-bred foreigner," ex-
med Albine.
'He is charming," sighed the languishing Lucie, with a long look at
Swede.
While the latter was placing two rolls of gold and three packets of
k-notes upon the table, Bouret stopped Viscount d'Amaulis to say:
'hat do you think of that fellow's impertinence?"

"I? Nothing," stammered Savinien.

"Don't you think that his susceptibility as regards our vaults is very strange? I cannot call upon him to take away his huge chest, though I half fancy that there is nothing but stones in it. Our rules oppose my doing so, but I will amuse myself by annoying him. I will send to-morrow to the Grand Hôtel to ask whether he really lives there, for I have an idea, I don't know why, that he has not yet given his real address."

"That would be very strange," said Savinien; "but, if you found out that he has deceived you, what should you do?"

"I should tell the story to everybody, and I would get Fougeray to tell it at the Plungers' Club. It would be well that you and all these gentlemen should know what sort of life this man leads. But, meantime, I have a great mind to attack his bank in a vigorous manner to show him that his high and mighty airs do not impose upon me. I don't often play, but when I do I play smartly, for ammunition isn't wanting. I should be delighted to win some coin from him. Shall we try it together?"

"I should be delighted, but I doubt our success. He has fiendish luck. I know that to my cost," sighed Savinien.

"Don't you think that he plays fair?"

"Oh! it isn't that."

"Oh! there would be nothing surprising about it, but I answer for it that if he tries to cheat I shall detect it at once. I have the sharpest eyes in the world for anything of that sort, and I would give fifty louis for the pleasure of catching this more or less genuine Scandinavian in the very act. Listen to me, and let us take the opportunity."

"Come, Savinien, your revenge!" cried George. "Come, my dear fellow, we win all we want here."

And, indeed, the first three rounds had been for the players, and the banker was now engaged in paying on all sides with perfect good humour.

"Twenty louis on the right," said Bouret, taking out his pocket-book.

"At last I recognise my Bouret," said Anita; "the Bouret whom I knew as a bold player before his greatness bound him to the shore," she quoted, as an additional comment, and turning to Savinien, she said: "Viscount, a serious man gives you the example. Follow it! Go and put twenty louis on the left and come and sit here by me. It is a lucky place."

Savinien had certainly not come to play, and regretted not having been able to escape, but things turned out in such a way that it had become difficult to refuse without appearing unreasonable. Besides, as the under-manager of the Provincial Bank allowed himself to play, Baron de Trémorin's nephew did not need to be squeamish. At heart, he would not have been sorry to win back from Count Aparanda a part of the money which he had lost to him, and he did not risk ruining himself, as he merely had about him three notes of a thousand francs each. He mentally resolved to sacrifice these, and so he followed Anita's advice by seating himself beside her and risking the stake which the volatile creature had challenged him to lay down. He won, and Bouret, who had played against him, lost.

The women were in luck, except Albine; but she had her own way of disposing her money in piles. When she lost three louis she managed to pay but one, and the banker had not the bad taste to appear to observe this. She was lucky on the following round, for every one won, the count having thrown baccarat. After a few changes the luck ran definitively

t Aparanda, and towards the end of the game his bank was nearly sted. The Viscount d'Amaulis had doubled the sum he had about M. Bouret, more fortunate and bolder, had won ten thousand , George, five or six thousand, M. de Boisguerin, four thousand, e women, on their side, were more or less winners.

ita thought it her duty, as the mistress of the house, to play ately, but Albine and Lucie had become quite reckless.

e Russian, who was intoxicated, had contrived to lose, but it was trifle, so that there remained scarcely enough for the banker to out with, for any time at least, at the present rate of play. It was sible not to do justice to Count Aparanda's bearing in face of this ful ill-luck. He was as calm as when he had taken his seat at the able, and he smiled more and more. One would have sworn that it pleasure to him to pay.

vinien, who was observing him, had not even surprised a single re indicative of ill-humour, or yet a cloud upon his face. Bouret, lso had his eye upon him with other thoughts than those of Yvonne's , had his trouble for nothing. One could not really suspect a man eating when he had not yet once turned up eight or nine, and d baccarat at almost every throw.

Finish me off, gentlemen!" he said, gaily. "I wish my bank had out till the end of the round, so that I might give my place to some uckier than myself."

is was the first time he had spoken since he had begun dealing.

Count, you are the finest player that I ever saw," said the mistress e house, with gravity.

Not one of these gentlemen would take losses so coolly," muttered Lucie.

Long live Sweden!" exclaimed the blonde Albine, who had just won louis.

ne players of both sexes were preparing their stakes, when suddenly et said to Savinien: "Viscount, shall we go banco between us?"

Willingly," replied Savinien, who thought himself about to have a run of luck.

ie cards were dealt, and Count Aparanda showed a nine, accompanied court card. There was seven on the right, and six on the left.

et and Savinien had only to pay; there was no escape.

Be good enough to count what you have before you," said M. Bouret, careless tone, which did not agree with the expression of his face.

was found that there were seven thousand francs remaining before count, and Savinien, for his share, had to give back all his winnings, les several hundred francs of his capital. Had he consulted the sub-ager of the Provincial Bank, or even looked at him, he would pro-y have stopped playing, for he would have seen that Bouret was tly folding up the notes which remained to him after this unlucky d to put them in his pocket-book.

However, Savinien was in the worst possible frame of mind for a man plays against a bank. His self love was up in arms, as though, upon ld of another kind, he had to fight against this foreigner who seemed destined to be his adversary everywhere and always. He was as much iliated as vexed at having lost, and to make up for this, his first check, cornfully threw upon the table his two last thousand-franc notes. A h sweep carried them off in the twinkling of an eye, and, by some irony ate, the right, having nine against the banker's eight, won.

Bouret, who had not played, rose, saying: "That is a warning, if I am any judge! Now, you won't win a louis more."

"That is a good excuse for going off with one's winnings," sneered Lucie.

"Your prophecies are very discouraging," said Anita.

"No, he is only playing Charlemagne," said Albine.

"Young ladies, in this world a man does what he can," replied Bouret calmly. "If I were not sure of losing, I shouldn't go."

"What! you are going to desert us?" cried the mistress of the house.

"Business, my dear friend, business! I must be up at seven to-morrow morning."

"The gentleman is free to go, if he pleases," said Aparanda. "Besides, the deal is at an end; there are only five cards left; not enough for the deal; and so we can stop at once, if you wish it."

"No, not at all!" cried the players in chorus, excited by the winnings so easily obtained. No one but Viscount d'Amaulis had lost as yet.

"I am at the orders of the majority," said the Swede, graciously; "and if these gentlemen will take the trouble to shuffle the cards, I will deal as long as they like."

"That, now, is speaking like a true gentleman," exclaimed Lucie, in a paroxysm of enthusiasm.

While the process suggested by Count Aparanda was going on, Savinien rose to light a cigar, and to give himself a moment for reflection. The voice of reason bade him leave, and a feeling for which he could not account bade him stay. It was mingled vexation, wrath, and, above all, pride. It went against him to yield the field to the enemy, and it did not suit him to imitate the financier Bouret's prudent economy. Lucie's exclamation obscured Savinien's better judgment, and he did not realise that being "a gentleman" had nothing to do with the matter. However, M. Montauron's wary lieutenant took him aside and said to him:

"Will you allow me to give you a little advice, which, I fear, you won't take? This Swede seems to me to be a dangerous man. I think that he lost too much during that exceptional run of ill luck for it to be due only to chance, and if I were you, I should mistrust the coming onset. I see that you have made up your mind to go on, and I don't undertake to stop you; but if I were in your place, I would play for low stakes."

"Such is my intention," replied the viscount; "and it would be difficult for me to do otherwise, as I have but twenty louis left of the money I had with me."

"Oh, the Swede will take your word for whatever you wish to play for, and I strongly advise you not to adopt that way of playing with him. I am going home, and to-morrow I shall send to the Grand Hôtel to see whether this gentleman is staying there. I begin to be puzzled by his numerous changes of address and his overplus luggage. Good night, my dear viscount. If you have any leisure, come to chat with me at my office. Who knows," added Bouret, laughing, "whether you won't have occasion to open your casket to take out some money to pay your gambling debts? I hope not; but if it unfortunately so happens, I hope that you will come upstairs to see me before going down to the vaults."

This said, the lively manager of the Provincial Bank spun round on his heels and reached the door without being called back. The players were too busy with the game which was about to be resumed, and Savinien took good care not to prolong an interview in which the unfortunate

t, which he had promised to return to Madame Montauron on the
ing afternoon, was again brought up. He had not time to think of
M. Bouret had said, for he was called for on all sides, and told that
y was waited for to recommence the game. He yielded, and it was
n that he declared that he had no more money. He was obliged to
side Anita and burn up his last cartridges, which were rapidly con-
d.

e new game was what is called in club slang the "razor game." An
ing run of luck began at once in favour of the banker, and the third
emptied Savinien's pockets. He would have easily consoled himself
ne not seen that his friend George was coining money, so to speak,
his pencil. The far-seeing Anita had prepared a pile of pieces of
to receive all amounts and names, and Fougeray had already reached
ast resort of those whose pockets are drained.

e count declared that he would accept I O U's as though they were
n, including even those signed by the ladies, and everybody now
to take advantage of this offer. The ladies risked little by putting
signature in circulation, and the men, mad with the fever of play,
nger calculated what might result from the facilities offered to
. It seemed as though Bouret's departure had taken away all the
good sense left in the room.

ery one was busy scribbling the amount he or she staked. Anita
ner friends gave notes of five louis, Boisguérin of twenty-five, and
eray of fifty.

Your turn, viscount!" said the lady of the house, passing Savinien
slips of paper, to be converted into I O U's, and a pretty gold pencil.
id this as though it had been the most natural thing in the world,
Savinien would have found it awkward to ask for an explanation.
es, the viscount was no longer himself. It was not merely the
g of appearing countrified which led him to play on parole. The
n of gambling had laid his claws upon him, and rather than give up
ng he would have signed for any amount. He contented himself,
ver, with writing his name to ten notes of a thousand francs each,
promised himself that this should be all he would do.

nita, who read them over his shoulder, exclaimed:

That is right, viscount! Now you are in the swing. You really
do less than your friend George, as you made as much as he did at
Bourse. The attack is fifty louis, that is all. People won't say, at all
s, that we play like shop-keepers at my house."

vinien could have dispensed with all these praises, but he scarcely
l them. His mind was entirely given to the game, which had begun
, after a short interruption needed to write the I O U's on the strips
per. The signers soon saw that this interval had not changed Count
anda's luck. Nines and eights still fell from his fingers like hail
heaven. He made but one swoop for the first note laid down by
unt d'Amaulis, who then laid down a second, and after that, a third.
ne other players, equally unlucky, and as persistent as he, signed as
s possible. The pencil was snatched up by one after another. The
e, still imperturable, classed the notes methodically, and it was
us that his good luck did not make his mind less clear.

ch loser had now given his pile of paper, and when, by chance,
anda had to pay, he did not mix the notes. He gave each person
otes he had signed, as payment, and like a bank which carries to

account profits, losses, and doubtful debts, he classed the feminine signatures apart. He even allowed the ladies to take them back to avert the necessity of writing their pretty names too often; he contented himself with verbal promises from them, and this generosity cost him nothing, as he laid no stress upon their written engagements. Thanks to this course, they had no grudge against him for persistently winning.

But the serious players were not satisfied. The polite Boisguérin swore between his teeth. Glébof drank like a sponge, and growled like a bear. Fougeray was silent, but made nervous gestures, and it was easy to see that he was perfectly furious. Savinien, for his part, no longer knew what he was doing. He had forgotten all things, the past, the future, the wise advice of M. Bouret, Madame Montauron's sorrows, the manor of Plouër, and the vaults of the Provincial Bank. He only thought of struggling against the insolent luck of the foreigner who swept off everything from the table with exasperating regularity. He did not even regret the notes for thousands which were taking flight toward Sweden, and he did not stop to calculate their number.

The game ended as it had begun, and a last more disastrous and irritating round than all the rest carried off the final hopes of Viscount d'Amaulis, who had increased his stake tenfold in the hope of recovering himself.

This time, a kind of rage and silent anger seized him, shown neither by gesture nor by utterance. His fingers suddenly felt the medal of the Virgin, which he had worn ever since he had left Plouër. It had not brought him luck at play, this talisman given by Yvonne, but it preserved him from a worse misfortune than that of a heavy loss of money: it checked him on a road which might have ended in dishonour. For it would have been dishonour to have owed this odious foreigner a larger sum than he could have paid within twenty-four hours.

Savinien closed his eyes, and it seemed to him that he saw his cousin kneeling in the old church at Plouër, and repeating on his behalf the prayer for the shipwrecked.

He saw at last that the name of Amaulis was in danger, and that he must stop if he would save it. Count Aparanda gave him an opportunity to do so.

The triumphant Swede, after distributing the last card of the victorious deal, set himself quietly to counting the notes which he had captured.

"Have you enough of them?" ironically asked George.

"No, sir," replied the Swede, without apparent emotion. "I wish to go on, but I wish to know what I have won, and these gentlemen will be glad, also, to know what they have lost."

"I should be greatly obliged to you if you would count the notes which you hold with my name," said Savinien, rising; "I wish to stop now."

"The deuce, my dear fellow!" said Glébof; "you will break up the game."

"Why? You are free to remain; I am going."

"So am I," said Fougeray. "I have enough of a game in which not one point in ten can be made."

"The fact is," muttered Boisguérin, "that I never saw such a game as this."

"So much the more reason for getting back what we have lost," grumbled the Muscovite.

"Try if you like, I have no confidence in it," replied George.

he women kept a prudent silence. They felt that it was in vain to ggle against the count's luck, and they hoped he would tear up their s. The rest mattered little to them.

Aparanda went on with what he was doing without disturbing himself sten to the talk going on round about.

'Well, sir,' said he to Viscount d'Amaulis, who had spoken first, re are sixty-nine notes of fifty louis each. Be good enough to verify n."

'That is useless," replied Savinien, "you can give them back to me nst the sixty-nine thousand francs which I owe you, and which I will l you in the morning to the Grand Hôtel."

'I should be sorry you took such trouble. I will place your notes, in course of the day, in the cash-box at the club, and you can take them whenever you please."

'Very well: you shall be paid this evening," replied Savinien, drily. he turned his back upon the lucky Swede, who was now employed in nting the notes of the other players.

'My dear friend," said Anita to Savinien, "you know how to stop t after a heavy loss. That is very seldom the case, especially with inners. I predict that you will make your fortune at play."

'No, for I shall play no more."

'Nonsense! you are sick of it just now, but you will get over that."

'I think not," replied the viscount, going towards the door.

She did not attempt to detain him, and he was able to get away with- being observed. But George Fougeray joined him in the courtyard.

'A pretty night we've had of it!' cried he, clenching his hand and ing it to heaven. "I have lost just ten thousand less than you have . It was well worth while our making a splendid hit at the Bourse to ch that rascal Aparanda! He *is* a rascal, that I'll bet any amount, it would not surprise me if he had cheated. I must pay him, how- r, and I have not half the money that I owe him."

'How is that? I gave you nearly a hundred thousand francs."

'My dear boy, I have stopped up several gaps. I shall be obliged to row."

'If I had not lost everything, I should be glad to help you."

'Yes, indeed; I know that very well. But you cannot have much rself after the unlucky run you have had to-night, coupled with the es at the club."

'I believe that I shall not have anything left, for you remember that furniture and the upholsterer take up a good deal."

'Fortunately, I know a good-natured money-lender who will lend us housand louis."

'Thank you; I shan't need them."

'Nonsense! you have no money left—you admit that yourself. What l you do? In Paris you cannot live on air."

'In Paris, no; but at Plouër my room is ready and my plate laid. hen I am there I do without pocket-money."

'What! do you think of returning to Brittany?"

'Certainly. I even hope to be there before the end of the week."

'I don't believe a word of it! We will have a chat this evening, and will change your mind. Meantime, I am going to bed, if I can only l a cab. I live the devil of a way off, but you are almost at your own r—ah! there's a cab over there. Good night."

George began running down the Boulevard Malesherbes, leaving Savinien to his reflections, which were far from gay, although his resolution was taken, and there was a good side to the case.

"I shall never become accustomed to the way things go on here," said he to himself, as he went up the Rue Monceau. "It is just as well to end it at once for all. To-morrow Madame Montauron shall have her casket, Count Aparanda shall be paid, and I shall leave them to settle their intrigue as they see fit. I shall have done more than I am called upon to do for that most imprudent woman, and I shall be free to leave Paris without regret. I will add a postscript to my letter to tell my uncle that I shall very soon return home."

At the Rue Rembrandt the door-keeper pulled the door rope at the first ring. Viscount d'Amaulis entered undisturbed, and reached the rooms in which he had left Madame Montauron, and which he now hoped to find unoccupied.

It was four in the morning. Dawn was near, but it was still quite dark. The house, which Anita and her gay attendants had disturbed, had now become quiet again. All the tenants were at rest, and Savinien glided along the hall on tiptoe. He had the key of his rooms in his pocket; he now noiselessly opened the door, and was at first startled to see that the lamp was still lighted.

He had intentionally left it burning. Madame Montauron had been concealed in the bedroom, and might easily have escaped without a light. But lamps go out when they are not attended to, and here was his still aflame.

He almost immediately saw why this was so. At the moment when he drew back the tapestry curtain from before the door a woman, who had been seated near the window, rose and came towards him.

"You here, madame!" exclaimed Savinien, surprised and alarmed on finding that the imprudent woman, who ought long before to have returned to her husband's house, was still there. "I fear to guess why. The garden is watched? You could not escape?"

"I have not attempted to do so," said Madame Montauron; "I was waiting for you. Be calm; I am sure that the road is free."

"You forget that it is almost morning."

"What does that matter? Brigitte is on the watch, and if there were any danger she would have come to tell me of it."

"You were waiting for me, you say? But didn't you hear that party of madcaps say that they wished me to go with them to supper, and play a game of cards, which might have kept me away all the morning? It was a miracle that I got away so soon."

"I heard everything. I knew that you would return as soon as you could make your escape, and I waited, because I knew that you would see him."

"Who? Count Aparanda? Because, that's certain," said Savinien, bitterly.

He had not yet forgotten what his encounter with this repulsive personage had cost him. The lady hesitated a moment before asking a question which had already offended Viscount d'Amaulis when addressed to him prior to George Fougeray's ring at the door-bell; however, she said at last: "Did you ask——"

"His address!" interrupted Savinien; "another person asked it, and that person was Monsieur Montauron's partner."

Monsieur Bouret! What! at that girl's house?"

There's nothing in that to surprise one. He knows them all. He has style and language of a man who goes to see such women. He spoke indiscreetly before that gentleman about the casket which I have to rn to you."

But you did not tell him that you intended to take it back orrow?" asked Madame Montauron, eagerly.

No, madame, I was very careful not to do so, for indiscretion is one is smallest faults. Monsieur Bouret would no doubt have told the ctor of the Provincial Bank of my intentions, and this, perhaps, is all would be wanting to confirm your husband in his suspicions. How-, it is none the less true that, thanks to this gentleman's gabble, nt Aparanda now knows that I have deposited a casket at the banking se in the Avenue de l'Opera, and that I did so at the very time when laced an enormous chest there himself. I mention this fact to you; can perhaps infer from it something that I am not able to detect, e I do not know the nature of your relations with this foreigner," ed Savinien, somewhat rudely.

I was about to tell you the story of my life when your friends came ke you away," said Madame Montauron. "I was about to explain to why it was necessary for me to know where Count Aparanda lived. re returning to the narrative of my sad past, I wish to say to you that sieur Aparanda has never seen the casket, and has no idea of its ents."

So much the better, madame. I will not undertake to inform him as hat the contents may be, as I hope never to see him again; but I am to tell you what interests you so much. Count Aparanda, when he the hotel where I was staying, went to the Grand Hotel. That, at all ts, is the address which he gave to Monsieur Bouret in my presence."

Do you think it is a false one," asked Madame Montauron.

It is not I who think that, but rather Monsieur Bouret."

On what does he found his doubts as to an assertion the accuracy of h he can easily ascertain."

On the fact that Count Aparanda made a false declaration a few days to a clerk, whose business it is to take down the names of all depos-

Count Aparanda had himself inscribed as living at the Rue du ler hotel, which he had left some hours before he gave the address."

That is strange, indeed," faltered the lady, hanging her head; "does now that you were living in that hotel as well as he?"

Monsieur Bouret gave him this information also. But my position as ount Aparanda is very definite, and the line of conduct which I shall eforth follow is laid down. I do not wish to be mixed up with that leman's affairs, and it will not suit me to enter into any relations with

You asked me for a certain indication. I have given it. When have received your casket my part will be finished. I have only to that no one will ever penetrate the secret of this troublesome nture."

his was said in a firm, almost a harsh tone. Prior to the game which had such disastrous results Viscount d'Amaulis would have shown consideration for a fallen woman; but play had irritated his nerves hardened his heart.

Madame Montauron felt the reproof and raised her head. "I will tell my secret," said she, in a voice full of emotion.

"I do not ask to know it," replied Savinien.

"You must know it, so that you may be able to judge of my conduct. Listen, sir, and when you have heard my story, if you think me still unworthy of pity, I shall no longer ask your help. I shall resign myself to my fate, and to whatever God pleases. Your uncle, perhaps, told you that my father, the Marquis de Louvigné, was the companion of his childhood and his most intimate friend?"

"No, madame. My uncle never mentioned your name to me."

"But he expressly urged upon you to see me as soon as you came to Paris. When you return to Brittany I assure you that he will question you at length as to the life I lead; he will ask you if I am happy, for he never withdrew his friendship from me, although he knows my entire life up to the date of my marriage."

"It was he who arranged your marriage, was it not?"

"Yes; and I have never ceased to bless him for the twelve years of peace which I owe to him. My husband has done everything to make me happy. It did not depend upon him to remove from my heart my remorse for having deceived him, the best of men—him to whom I owed everything."

Savinien had some trouble in concealing an ironical grimace. This avowal, enveloped in sentimental phraseology, shocked him to such a degree that he mentally asked himself whether his uncle's favourite was not a monster of hypocrisy.

"Yes, I deceived him," resumed Madame Montauron, "and—shall I say it? Monsieur de Trémorin helped me to deceive him."

This time, Savinien shrugged his shoulders, and no longer attempted to hide the astonishment which this unexpected statement caused him to feel. He soon realised, however, that the lady's words did not have the meaning which he had at first attributed to them.

"Monsieur de Trémorin married me to him," she continued, "and he knew that I had previously committed a fault."

"This is more credible," thought Yvonne's cousin. "It is bad enough that my uncle should have done that, and the husband has certainly no reason to congratulate himself on his friendship; but it is less astounding than if he had been the lover of the wife himself."

"A fault which I have cruelly expiated," resumed Madame Montauron, "and still expiate. My mother died at my birth; I was but fourteen years old when I lost my father. There remained only one relative to me, a first cousin, who was a widow and very old. She promised Monsieur de Trémorin to take charge of me when my education was completed. I was educated at a boarding-school, and I left it when I was eighteen to live at my cousin's house. Madame de Morvieux—such was her name—asked but one thing: to marry me off as soon as possible. She was almost poor, her husband having spent her money; but she was received in the best society, where she hoped to find a good match for the daughter of the Marquis de Louvigné, although my father had left me scarcely enough to live on. She took me into this society; but, to my cost, she also saw a great deal of the cosmopolitan society which forms a kind of foreign colony in the midst of Paris, and is recruited in all directions. Monsieur de Morvieux had travelled a great deal in the north of Europe, and his widow had kept up her intercourse with several Swedish and Russian families."

Savinien raised his head. He was beginning to see how this story would end

"You have guessed, have you not?" said Madame Montauron, in a sky voice. "A man remarked me; he was young, handsome, rich; he id me great attention, he assumed the attitude of a suitor for my hand, d my cousin, although she knew very little about him, made no attempt put me on my guard against the love which he inspired in my heart. d when I fell a prey to his wiles, when the consequences of my weakness ere irreparable, I learned that he was married."

"Married!" exclaimed Savinien. "Count Aparanda married! It is him you speak, is it not? Ah! I felt that the man could not be other an a scoundrel!"

"Your uncle looked for him for a long time, with the intention of lling him," said Madame Montauron.

"That is an execution which I would willingly undertake myself," said iscount d'Amaulis, between his teeth. "The coward fled, no doubt, after ving dishonoured you?"

"He returned to Sweden."

"He really has a country, then? I should never have supposed so. I ould not be surprised if he were a sham count."

"No, he inherited his title from his ancestors; and when I had the isfortune to meet him he had not yet stained his name by conduct unorthy of a gentleman."

"But he has dragged it in the mire since that time. That I have no fficulty in believing."

"I do not know what he may have done, for I have not seen him for velve years. I only know that he squandered an enormous fortune, and at, after a frightful scandal, he was obliged to leave his own country. e lived the life of an adventurer for a long time, running all over urope without settling anywhere, and without any pecuniary resources f an honourable kind."

"I know what his resources are: he lives by gambling," said Savinien, nd as he muttered these words he well remembered the last game of accarat which he had played.

"He went to all the seaside resorts, and at last to Monaco. It was om there that he wrote to me to tell me that he was coming to Paris."

"What! did you still keep up a correspondence with this man?"

"There was a tie between us which prevented a rupture with him."

"A tie! between the criminal and the victim?"

"I had become a mother," said Madame Montauron, in a low tone.

Savinien started, but remained silent. He understood all at last.

"Yes," resumed the poor woman, with an effort, "my misfortune was omplete. In order to hide the consequences of my weakness, Madame e Morvieux took me to Italy. We passed a year at Pisa, where I had a aughter born to me."

"Did my uncle know this?" eagerly asked Yvonne's cousin.

"No, I told him of my fault alone."

"That is not so bad," said Savinien to himself.

He would have been grieved to admit that M. de Trémorin had conributed to deceive a worthy man so completely, and tried to find extenuatng circumstances for his conduct in the matter.

"He was guided by the light-mindedness of a nobleman who thinks ess of the honour of a mere citizen than of the reputation of a nobly born oung lady," muttered Savinien. "I shall never be guided by such rinciples as those."

"Do not condemn him," said Madame Montauron, as she caught his words. There were tears in her eyes. "I am the daughter of his dearest friend, and he knew that I had yielded to temptations against which no one had put me on my guard, for I had no mother. He held out his hand to me from above the abyss into which I had fallen. When he effected my marriage, he well knew that I should pass the remainder of my life in endeavouring to expiate the past."

"But that past rises up against you, since your lover has reappeared, and did you not say just now that you had never ceased to receive his letters?"

"Could I forbid him to write to me about our child?" asked Madame Montauron.

"What! did he trouble himself about her after having betrayed and abandoned you?" exclaimed Savinien incredulously.

"Madame de Morvieux exacted that the child should remain in Italy. She confided her, under an assumed name, to some poor people, who were ignorant of the secret of her birth, and who, for a small sum, undertook to bring her up as their own daughter. My cousin, who held my fate in her own hands, wished me to promise never to see the child again. She wished to save the honour of the name of Louvigné. It mattered little to her that my heart should be broken. Your uncle would have been more humane, and I have often regretted not having told him the whole truth."

"Had he known it, I certainly doubt whether he would have lent himself to the arrangement proposed by your cousin to cover an irreparable fault."

"It would have been a thousand times better had I remained unmarried," rejoined Madame Montauron. "But I was not yet twenty years old. I was without strength, without help, crushed under the weight of my shame. I consented to everything except to the sacrifice exacted of me. I would not consent to give up my daughter for ever, and I wrote to her father to let him know her whereabouts, and to beg him to watch over her, and to inform me of all that concerned her. I hoped that a day would come, perchance, when I might be able to bring her to France secretly, without disturbing the peace of mind of the man whose name I bore."

"Did Count Aparanda consent to what you asked?" asked Viscount d'Amaulis.

"For two years there was no reply, and I had been eighteen months a married woman when he wrote to me that his wife was dead, that nothing further obliged him to remain in Sweden, and that he was about to leave for Italy. He protested that he was repentant, and that he would do nothing to trouble me."

"He had learned, then, that Monsieur Montauron had married you?" said Savinien.

"Yes; and although he approved of my course, he expressed his regret at being unable to repair the evil he had done by marrying me. He promised to at least watch over our child, and for ten years past he has vaguely written to me every month concerning her."

"She is still living!" exclaimed Savinien.

"She is alive and is in Paris. I was on my way to see and embrace her when I was obliged to take refuge in your room on flying from my husband."

"What! did that man tell you that she was with him? It was an infamous falsehood!" said the viscount.

"No," replied the suffering woman. "I misunderstood his letter. This is what had happened: My daughter had remained in Pisa. It had been agreed between her father and myself that he should bring her back to France when she was of an age to marry. However, quite recently, the good people who had brought her up died within a few days of one another. The count was at Monaco. He hastened to Pisa, and wrote to me to ask me if he should bring Jeanne to Paris, and place her in a boarding-school, where, at least, I could see her. Need I tell you my answer? I had scarcely existed for twelve years, and I was now about to behold the child who had been torn from my arms in her infancy."

"But you have not seen her. What has he done with her?" asked M. d'Amaulis.

"He arrived here with her about thirteen days ago, and immediately wrote to me that he had confided Jeanne to a relative of his, a Swedish lady, who lives in the country, in the environs of Paris. He thought this a better and less dangerous arrangement than keeping her with him at a hotel. He begged me at the same time to see him as soon as possible, because he would be forced to leave sooner than he had supposed. He said, he told me, lost heavy sums at play."

"He has made up for that since," muttered Savinien.

"He added that the time had come for making permanent arrangements for the future welfare of our child, and that he relied upon me to invest, in Jeanne's name, a sum of money which would keep her entirely secure against want. He reminded me that I might die, and that he himself was completely ruined."

"He does not look so."

"This letter was a terrible blow to me. I am rich, but I cannot dispose of a fortune which belongs to my husband. I possessed nothing but my diamonds that I could turn into money."

"Then you were taking them to this man that day?" said Savinien.

"Yes; in order that he might sell them and settle the money on my daughter."

"Did he know that you were bringing them to him?" asked the viscount.

"No," was the reply. "I wrote to him merely saying that I was trying to procure money; that I would go to see him as soon as I could succeed in doing so; and that I begged of him to so arrange matters as to enable me to embrace my daughter on the day of my going to see him."

"What did he reply?"

"I received a note from him containing these words only: 'Come; you shall see her; but don't delay more than three days. I am forced to pronounce the idea of living in Paris. If I am constrained to leave without seeing you, I will let you know where Jeanne is.'"

"He did not keep his word, I presume? It is true, however, that he has not yet left the city," said Savinien, thoughtfully.

"After receiving this letter, I endured terrible mental anguish for forty-eight hours. My husband did not leave me one moment to myself, and I had no possibility of getting away. When, on the morning of the third day, I was able to escape——"

"I know the rest, madame," interrupted Savinien. "But I understand less than ever the course pursued by Count Aparanda."

"I do not even try to understand it. It is sufficient for me that he has not left Paris yet," said the banker's wife.

"You still wish to see him, then, after all this?"

"I wish to see my daughter."

"But you will be obliged to entreat this man to allow you to see her, for you are completely at his mercy. You will again be obliged to risk your reputation and your peace by running after him at the hotels where he may put up, until he sees fit to disappear with the money he has won."

"You might spare me this danger and these humiliations," said Madame Montauron, in a faltering voice.

"I?" exclaimed the viscount, in utter astonishment.

"Yes; you are acquainted with him now, and you know where he lives."

At this proposition, which Savinien would have foreseen had he been less anxious, he started with surprise and indignation.

"What!" cried he; "you ask me to interview this man, when you have just told me what he has done, and that he has led the life of an adventurer for twelve years? Don't expect that of me, madame. I have seen only too much of him already, and I don't intend ever to see him again."

"Not even to save me from despair, and to restore my daughter to me?" entreated Madame Montauron.

"Your daughter? But I cannot restore her to you. Do I know where she is?" said the viscount.

"He will tell you if you ask him."

"What right have I to ask him? I am neither your relation nor——"

"You are the nephew of the man who was my friend and my defender, and who if he were here would not refuse to aid me again. I will tell him all, and make him the judge as to the situation in which I find myself. Do you think that he would advise me to abandon an unfortunate girl who is not guilty, and who has no means except what I might provide."

"You forget that she only knows her father, and that he has taken care of her since her birth," replied Savinien, in an ironical tone.

"You cannot think that I ought to leave her with him?"

"No, certainly not, for she could not be in worse hands; but it does not appear to me that he intends to keep her, since he began by getting rid of her on arriving in Paris, by handing her over to one of his own countrywomen, I think you said?"

"Yes, to a Swedish lady, whose name he did not tell me, and if he goes away without telling me where my daughter is, I——"

"I don't fancy that he is thinking of going away. He has become a member of a club, and was buying some furniture the other day at the auction-rooms in the Rue Drouot."

"But he is still at a hotel, and may leave Paris at any moment!"

"True. Now that he has won a great deal of money, he will perhaps think it best to protect his belongings and his person by leaving for foreign parts. And you must permit me to remark, madame, that if Count Aparanda really wished to make proper provision for his daughter, he is fully able to do so. He has won a hundred and fifty thousand francs at cards within a few day's time. If his outrageous good luck continues, as I have no doubt that it will, he will soon have two hundred thousand. That, I believe, is what your diamonds are worth."

"Do you think that the idea would occur to him of employing his winnings to shield Jeanne from want? You do not know him."

"I do know him, madame, and now that I am satisfied as to what he , I am greatly surprised that you should have thought of handing him casket, the contents of which constitute a fortune."

"I thought only of my daughter, and had but one resource. How- ver, Providence has permitted that this fortune should fall into your ands."

"It will not remain in them long," said Savinien, abruptly. "To- orrow you shall have the casket. I will go to take it back at the risk f being caught by your husband, or betrayed by the indiscretion of his artner. I promised you to do this, and I will do it; but I can do noth- ng more. I wish to return to Brittany to-morrow, or this evening, if I an. I should go now, if I had not promised to restore this casket to you."

"May I know the reason of this strange resolution? Yesterday you ere thinking of making a long stay in Paris, and you moved into these ooms."

"Yesterday I had money enough to live on here, money made against ny will, and which I really did not care to take with me to Plouer. My ncle would have thought better of me for leaving it here, as it was money cquired in an objectionable way. But I shall not now be troubled to end it. I have just lost it all at baccarat, and owe it to Count Aparanda. shall pay it over to him this evening, and when this debt is met, nothing ore will detain me in Paris."

"This evening, you say? Do you expect to see Count Aparanda this vening?"

"I hope not. He wished to spare me the disagreeable necessity of eeting him. I proposed to take the money to him at the Grand Hotel, here he is supposed to be staying; but he very eagerly suggested nother course, which consists in depositing the amount of my debt in the ash box at the Plungers' Club. I shall not be there when he goes to laim it."

"But it depends upon you to be there or not!"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, I ask it of you as a favor: I ask it of you in the name f your uncle, who, if he could hear me, would add his entreaties to mine, ell everything to this man who holds my daughter's life and mine in his ands. Tell him everything, relate to him what took place on that fatal ay when I fled to your room to avoid being found by my husband. When e knows all, he will not be surprised by your intervention in this painful lair, and will not refuse to tell you where my daughter is."

"How do you know that, madame?" said Savinien, impatiently. This man may have plans that do not tally with your wishes, and ven if he consents to answer me, what part should I then play? o you wish me to go and take a girl, whom I do not know, from a wedish woman in whose existence I do not believe?"

"No. I will ask no more of you. Brigitte, who knows all—for she as never left me from my childhood—will do the rest. She will come ere to-morrow to receive the casket, and she will take charge of Jeanne. ou will never hear of me again, but I shall bless you for ever."

Savinien struggled in vain against the emotion which he felt, he was nable to resist the woman's entreaties, the mother's tears. "Will it atisfy you," said he at last, "if I question this man, and force him to eply, for I warn you that I shall force him to do so if he presumes to efuse?"

"Why should he refuse? You must tell him that I am ready to make any sacrifice."

"I shall tell him no such thing, as I believe him to be fully capable of taking every advantage of your situation; but I will tell him that I have promised to enable you to recover your daughter, and that this is a matter to be settled between him and me."

"You do not mean to fight a duel with him, to risk your life against his? No! no! that must not be!" cried Madame Montauron.

"The stakes are far from equal," replied Savinien, "but we shall not go so far as that. I do not know whether Count Aparanda is brave or not—I admit that he may be so—but I am sure that he has every motive for avoiding an exposure."

"He will yield, and to-morrow evening you will——"

"To-morrow evening, madame," interrupted Savinien, "I will visit you in compliance with Monsieur Montauron's kind invitation, and I shall by that time have seen Count Aparanda. He comes almost every day to the club, at five o'clock, and will not fail to do so to-morrow, as he has money to receive."

"Then you will be able to tell me everything at my house?"

"All that I may have learned. I promise you that, madame, as well as to restore you your diamonds; and now suffer me to remind you of the lateness of the hour," added Savinien, who wished to escape being thanked.

The sky was already brightening, and a narrow ray of light stole in between the curtains. Madame Montauron did not add a word. She felt that it was no time to utter many thanks. She extended her hand to Viscount d'Amaulis, who placed a respectful kiss upon it before opening the glass door leading to the garden. It was not yet quite dawn; the park was still and dark. Everything showed that Madame Montauron could return home without danger.

Without risking an increase of the peril to which she had exposed herself, Savinien could not escort her further than the gate between the grounds, but he followed her with his eyes as far as he could see her in the dimness of the dawn, and had the satisfaction of seeing her pass on to the shadow cast by the high walls of her own house.

Reassured as to her return home he re-entered the room which had witnessed such novel adventures, and threw himself grumbling into the arm-chair where he had been seated when Madame Montauron's coming had so startled him.

The letter to his uncle was still on the table, and his hand had stopped in the middle of a paragraph in which he asked M. de Trémorin how Madame Montauron's marriage had come about.

"Bless me!" he muttered, as he read it over, "I can now answer the question which I ask of him, and I have a great mind to scratch it out. But no! I will simply add that I cannot accustom myself to life in Paris, and that I am making ready to return to Plouër. After all, however, I should act more wisely if I waited till to-morrow before speaking of returning, for I shall not be master of my own actions as long as I am held fast in the intrigue of this woman my dear uncle protected, and it will be a whole day's work to get rid of it entirely."

VIII.

WHEN Savinien d'Amaulis woke up after the troubled night which had brought his affairs back to the starting-point precisely as they were on his arrival in Paris—he immediately made up his accounts, and ascertained that when he had paid all that he owed, enough cash would not remain to enable him to take his ticket for Plouër.

Baccarat, his purchases of furniture, and his current expenses during his first week, had exhausted the sum which the lucky operation on change had sent as a windfall. Even the thousand francs received on his letter of credit had been spent. Thus it was absolutely necessary to make some new arrangement, for it was not certain that Madame Montauron's affairs would be brought to a satisfactory conclusion that day.

Savinien had promised to give her back her diamonds and to bring her back her daughter. He might, perhaps, hope that the withdrawal of the casket would be effected without difficulty: but he doubted the immediate success of the negotiation with Count Ajaranda. This equivocal individual seemed to him quite capable of raising difficulties. Savinien was aware that to deal with all the complications that might arise he would perhaps have to delay his departure, and, in any case, he thought it best to take such measures as would enable him to remain some days longer in Paris.

The easiest way would assuredly be to apply for some more money at the banking-house where his uncle had opened an account for him, and this was the first thought that occurred to his mind. But, on reflection, he clearly saw that the thing was not as easy as it seemed, and that, for the moment, it was indeed almost impracticable.

He remembered that he could not receive any money unless he took the trouble of going through M. Bouret's office—as the under-manager looked into letters of credit—and, on the other hand, he had not forgotten that he must go before noon to take out the casket. It would be dangerous to try and kill—as the phrase goes—two birds with one stone. An interview with the under-manager either before or after the visit to the vaults would be undesirable for many reasons. After the visit, Bouret would not fail to notice the casket that M. d'Amaulis carried and he would have indulged in some of his frivolous jokes as to this mysterious coffer, for Savinien, when once he had the precious casket in his hands, could not put it into a cab like a box of ties or handkerchiefs, but would have for safety's sake to carry it under his arm until he could place it in a drawer of his desk while waiting for the arrival of Brigitte.

Matters would be still worse if he saw Bouret before going to the vault. The financier was the man to ply the viscount with questions, to conjecture that his true errand was to withdraw his deposit, and to dog his footsteps until he had left the building.

Already on leaving the card-party at Anita's, M. Montauron's partner had alluded to the possibility of a speedy visit from Savinien, if the latter were obliged by a heavy loss at play to open the casket and take out some money for the purpose of paying his debts.

From all this, Baron de Trémorin's nephew concluded that it would be necessary to present himself twice at the Provincial Bank; the first time to take back the casket, the second to receive his money. It would be better, therefore, to leave one or two days' interval between the two visits; and

it was undeniably the better course to begin by taking out the casket, especially as Madame Montauron absolutely needed the diamonds for the evening reception. From all this it resulted that, for the time being, Savinien would remain without a copper.

Under other circumstances he would not have troubled himself about this temporary embarrassment, but he might have a deal of trouble as regarded the Swede, and he could not carry on war without ammunition.

He now remembered that on leaving Anita's house George Fougeray had spoken of a money-lender who would willingly lend a thousand louis, which was much more than Savinien cared to borrow, and in his innocence he said to himself that he might find at this financial interloper's the very small sum which he personally required for a little time. He had only to ask George to effect this for him, and George would be quite willing to do so, as he had proposed to his friend to raise on joint and equal terms for both a large loan at heavy interest.

Savinien mentally went through this reasoning while dressing at ten in the morning, and he was already on the point of starting out, as he had given but little time to sleep. He calculated that twelve o'clock would be a favourable moment for presenting himself at the Provincial Bank. He had gone there at an earlier hour on his first visit, and had found M. Bouret there; but this financier, like all business men in Paris, probably breakfasted late, and remained away for that reason in the middle of the day. This would, at least, account for Savinien having met him a few days before at M. Montauron's house at noon. The head director, for his part, never went to the office in the Avenue de l'Opéra until after Bourse hours.

Now, Savinien thought it absolutely necessary to go to the vaults in the absence of both of these parties. Before doing so he had time to call upon George, who lived in the Rue d'Antin, and was probably still in bed. It was all very well for a country gentleman to rise early after going to bed late, but Parisians after a night at baccarat usually sleep the best part of the morning, and George, although born at Rennes in Brittany, was now-a-days a thorough Parisian. Knowing this, the viscount resolved not to lose the chance, and rang for his make-shift valet to fetch a cab. He was glad to have an opportunity of seeing the doorkeeper, as the latter was in the pay of the landlord, for he wished to assure himself that no one had complained of having been disturbed by the revellers of the night before, or by Madame Montauron's arrival and retreat. The doorkeeper did not appear to have noticed these intrusions, and Savinien was satisfied from his demeanour that he knew nothing whatever about the visit of the banker's wife.

A quarter of an hour later, Yvonne's cousin entered George Fougeray's rooms, the door being opened by that individual himself. "I thought I should have found you in bed," said Savinien, astonished to find his friend fully dressed, with his hat on his head.

"Five minutes later and you would not have found me at all," answered George. "My circumstances do not admit of my playing the idler at present. I have no château or lands in the provinces, and I must remain in Paris and fight the battle of life. I am going to try to raise some money."

"Take me with you."

"Oho! Then you have made up your mind not to creep pitiably back into your hole? Night brings good advice, it would appear. So much the better! I felt very sorry to see you take your ill luck so very much to

art. Now that you are better disposed our situation will change, I'll swer for that!"

"Oh, don't rejoice too much. I don't deserve your compliments, for I end to leave very soon. I am detained here for a few days longer, but en I have paid this Swede I shan't possess a farthing, and living here expensive."

"As if I didn't know it! I don't find it less than ten louis a day: ree hundred louis a month, and that without any extravagance. But I ve some debts, and when I think that this rascally Aparanda sweeps ay sixty thousand francs, the desire to strangle him, instead of paying n, takes hold of me. Unfortunately, this isn't customary. I must urn to Pinchard's clutches."

"Who may Pinchard be?"

"A charming fellow, who takes a pleasure in obliging his friends—at enty per cent."

"The money-lender of whom you spoke this morning?"

"Money-lender? Well, I should say so! Arab, Jew, skin-flint, ything you please! But don't take it into your head to call him so to s face. You would spoil our borrowing. This close-fisted chap tries to ay the gentleman. A type, my dear boy, for a play. You will see him! will amuse you."

"The more from the fact that he won't ruin me, even at a big interest. want but little from him."

"The deuce! But let me tell you that Pinchard does not go into small ansactions; he says that it would lessen him in his own esteem."

"I cannot take a heavy debt upon myself for the purpose of pleasing m, however."

"How much do you want?"

"A thousand francs, and if I must I can do with less."

"A thousand francs! Pinchard would laugh in your face. What good ould a thousand francs do you! You could not get along for a week."

"It will be enough for me."

"Do you intend to live on the fare that they prepare at Duval's eating-uses? If such are your ideas, my friend, you may as well pawn your atch at once; that would be the shortest way. But, now I think of it, ny don't you go to Bouret for fifty louis, if that is all you want? You ven't used up your letter of credit, that I know of, and you need only ke the trouble of going to the Avenue de l'Opéra when you leave here."

"I don't wish to go to Monsieur Bouret," answered Savinien.

"Why not?" asked George. "Are you afraid to tell him that you st heavily at cards last night? He must think that you did, I imagine, you were already being victimised when he took his departure. Just ink that he should have managed to win - the wretch!"

"No, it is not on that account, but I have my reasons for not wishing see him to-day, and I need some money at once. In a few days' time I ll draw out the rest of my letter of credit, and pay back your money-nder. There are six thousand francs at the bank of mine, and I have ly received a thousand. I shan't be at all put out to pay him."

"If I can understand you, I wish the devil may fly away with me! hat! pay a big interest when you need not do it? That's a strange ay of doing things, I must say. I tell you that you can't do as you pro-se. Pinchard wouldn't lend less than ten thousand, and that only for a w days."

"And I won't borrow what I can't pay."

"Nor I, either. I have been in debt often, but have always paid at last. The proof of this is that I have credit at Pinchard's; and he knows very well whom he lends to. I can have a thousand louis from him on my signature, but, unfortunately, a thousand louis would do me no good just now. I shall be obliged to strain a point, and I foresee that it will be hard work. Pinchard is as particular as he can be, and as stubborn as a mule. He has his customers all classed and ticketed. Each one is worth so much and no more, and when once he has settled in his mind how much, he won't budge an inch."

"The deuce! you run the risk, then, of being in a very bad fix?"

"I admit that I am afraid it will be so, and this would be extremely annoying, for if I made that scamp of a Swede wait for his money, everybody in the club would know that I am behindhand, and I should be 'posted.' That is the way in Paris, my dear boy! You may put off your tradespeople, and even cause their failure; that is considered quite the thing among certain people. But a man who doesn't pay his gambling debts within twenty-four hours is thought nothing of. At the most he may be allowed forty-eight hours; they do that at some clubs."

"Tell me at once how much you need to square everything."

"Thirty thousand francs; and as I must have something to go on with till I find some new chance, it is, in point of fact, forty thousand that I must borrow."

"Exactly twice as much as your usual money-lender is in the habit of letting you have. But there must be other people in Paris of the same description."

"Hundreds, but with this man everything is very prompt. He gives you good bank-notes, and pays them down. It is easy to see why. His usual customers are gamblers who can't wait. Other lenders keep you waiting, and sometimes end by offering you aluminium watches and stuffed crocodiles in payment. There's nobody better than Pinchard, I tell you. Pinchard for ever!"

"Very well, but if he refuses," said Savinien, who had already forgotten his own difficulties in his interest in those of his friend.

"Well, if he refuses, I can throw myself into the Seine or go to Australia," rejoined Fougeray, with a grimace.

"Oh, before coming to that point——"

"I shall try other remedies less violent, of course. But I shall begin at the beginning, that is to say, with Pinchard, and I am losing precious time in talk. My man receives from nine till twelve, and I don't want to miss him."

"Let us go, then, my dear fellow. I should reproach myself with being the cause of your failure if I detained you here."

"You will come with me, then?"

"If you think it would be best."

"Certainly, you can be very useful to me; but remember, if you talk to Pinchard about borrowing fifty louis you will upset everything."

"Why? Your Pinchard prefers to lend a great deal, I see that, but if he can lend a great deal he can lend a little."

"Of course he can, but he won't, and he would have a very poor idea of your resources."

"I should really like to know what he could know about my resources, when he does not even know of my existence."

"That is where you are mistaken. Every man who is a member of a cent club is immediately entered upon Pinchard's register, for he ins himself as to his circumstances. I am sure that he knows already about yours, and had no trouble about getting his information."

"He must be wise if he knows as much about my circumstances as ur broker, Galipot."

"You may laugh, my dear fellow, but I'll bet that Pinchard has more nfidence in you than Galipot had when he went into operations on your count to the tune of six hundred thousand francs. It is well known erywhere now that you are a landowner and your uncle a millionaire."

"Still the same foolish story! The business people in Paris must be ots."

"Idiots or not, you may be sure that they think a great deal of your gnature, and that you will make the greatest mistake in the world if you mpromise your credit and mine by proclaiming that you stand in need a trifling sum. I tell you that if you make up your mind to borrow a spectable amount, say ten thousand, you would be giving me a great t without knowing it. Your negotiation would make mine much sier."

"How is that?"

"I should have preferred not to explain it to you, as you may think at I speak in my own interest, but as you wish me to be very explicit, I sure you that if we apply together to Pinchard for one loan he will not sitate a moment."

"What do you mean by 'one loan?'"

"I mean a loan guaranteed by notes bearing our collective signatures, d which we will share between us."

"Fifty thousand francs, then, since you need forty thousand? It would really absurd, and whatever desire I may have to oblige you I cannot ke upon myself a debt which I shall never be able to pay."

"Oh, I can understand your looking at the matter twice, or even fusing to have anything to do with it at all, as you need but a few louis, the interest is enormous; forty thousand francs for three months would st nearly three thousand francs. It is hard to make such terms unless e is forced to do so, I admit that, and I say no more. Still, there would a way of reconciling everything——"

"What way?" demanded Savinien, eagerly.

"No matter! no matter! I should seem to be urging you to comomise yourself to oblige me."

"Tell me what it is. I know that you are incapable of bringing me to trouble," said the viscount.

"Well, then, it would be sufficient if you would endorse the notes which shall give to Pinchard. I will undertake to meet them when due, and u need not trouble your head about them. With your name Pinchard ll make no difficulty about lending me forty thousand, on which, of urse, I will hand you a hundred, two hundred, or three hundred louis, nich you can return me from time to time at your convenience. I need t add that the interest will be entirely paid by me."

"No, no! I will pay my own proportion."

"That will be very little. We shall not discuss that. I only beg of u to reflect beforehand, as I have no wish to urge you against your will, ought also to explain to you upon what I rely to prevent our notes from ing protested, for you may imagine that my hopes are founded upon

some speculation on 'Change like that with which I associated you the other day. It isn't so, my dear fellow, such windfalls are too rare, and I have certainties elsewhere, a pile of 'Ottoman' stock bought low, which in three months will be worth ten times as much as I paid for it."

"How can you be sure that it will go up?"

"I have private information, my dear fellow. There is a syndicate being formed of twelve great financial companies to represent the interests of the bearers of the Turkish debt, and I know the delegate whom they will employ at Constantinople. In August, at the latest, the stock will go up. Take notice that, if by any almost impossible chance, it does not do so, I should only have to renew at three months. Pinchard does not refuse to renew once, though he won't do so twice; still, at the worst, I would sell my 'Ottomans,' which, even at their present rate, are worth more than fifty thousand francs. This would be bad, as in a very near future they would represent a fortune, but I would rather be utterly ruined than not honour my signature, and, above all, yours. If you doubt that, my dear Savinien, don't go any further, but let me go alone to tame the dragon of the Rue Sainte-Anne, for it is there that this terrible Pinchard lives."

"Listen," said Savinien, after a short silence, "I don't understand anything about all the speculations which you speak of; give me your word that you are sure, absolutely sure, of being able to pay when the notes fall due."

George Fougeray was sufficiently master of himself to control his delight at having this chance. "If you ask me to say I am sure, it is because you doubt me; my most solemn assurances would not change the situation," he replied. "It is useless, therefore, that I should take an oath. Keep your signature, my dear boy, and don't think any more about my difficulties, which I will arrange with Pinchard as well as I can."

"You turn testy very unnecessarily," replied Savinien, quickly. "When I ask you to give me your word it is a mere form. It is sufficient for you to say to me: 'Yes, I am sure of being able to repay in three months' time the sum which I borrow on your security.'"

"I have already said it, and I repeat it."

"Very good! That is all I require. If I thought you capable of deceiving me, I should not be your friend," said the viscount.

"That is as it should be, and I understand that you should speak so. I confess that you hurt my feelings just now. I said to myself: 'I don't recognise Savinien.' But now I find you to be the same as before. Let us say no more, but go at once to Pinchard's."

"Let us go to him," answered Viscount d'Amaulis, who always began by resisting allurements, and invariably ended by making some mistake or other.

Fougeray did not allow him time to change his mind; but urged him on with friendly chatter.

"I am not so well lodged as you are," said he, as they went down stairs. "Now-a-days an *entresol* isn't stylish at all. It was all very well at the time when the heroes of Paul de Kock's novels kept opera-dancers on six thousand francs a year. But now a man who wishes to be fashionable lives on the first floor. I shall go up when my 'Ottomans' go up. Speaking of rooms, have you reflected that you will owe Monsieur Montauron six months' rent even if you start for Brittany to-morrow?"

"That's true. I had not thought of it, however. But it is only fifteen

undred francs; and, besides, I shall sell that famous set of furniture hich you made me buy."

"There's no need of that. I like it, and if I take a permanent place his summer, I will buy it of you for what you gave for it. Here is your ab! Send it away, my dear fellow; we are only two steps from the Rue ainte-Anne. Pinchard likes to have people come to him on foot; he does ot care to let his business be known. I have known him refuse ten housand francs to a young man of my acquaintance who came to borrow hem in a mail-coach, just before driving to the races. All the shopkeepers n the neighbourhood came out on to their doorsteps to see the young fool rive up."

Savinien smiled at the money-lender's susceptibility, and sent away his ab. The walk was enlivened by the jokes of George, who had recovered is good humour, and the two friends soon reached the door of a house of lain appearance, an old house situated in that part of the Rue Sainte-Anne which has not yet been levelled or widened. Under the arched ntrance Savinien was greatly surprised to meet the Marquis Adhémar de affemas, who burst out laughing at sight of him, and said abruptly: "I ave caught you in the very act, cousin! You have come to see that ascal of a Pinchard! It seems to me that all your fine plans as to a agacious line of conduct have come to nothing, as you have already got o the money-lender."

"I beg your pardon!" stammered Viscount d'Amaulis. "I did not xactly come to——"

"Oh," interrupted the marquis, "don't think that I am blaming you or it! It is a bad thing to have recourse to this bird of prey, but it is he best thing to do when one is dead broke. Friends never have any money to lend when people want it, and they tell your troubles to every ne they meet. You see that I practise what I preach. I have made one f those blunders—it was last night—which are disastrous in a gentleman's ife, and I had to get up before dawn to come here and pull the providen ial Pinchard's bell rope. I hope that you will find him as easy to deal with as I have, and now, good-day. Good-by, cousin, till Sunday! I have et ten louis for you on a horse which is now at twenty to one, but vill be at 'evens' on the day of the Grand Prize of Paris."

With this the marquis disappeared, without honouring Fougeray, vhom Savinien was about to introduce, with a single glance

"Ah! so that is your cousin, that great lanky fellow Laffemas," said George, who had stood by, stiff as a pole, while this conversation had been going on, and had been very careful not to touch his hat.

"A cousin after a fashion. His great-great-grandmother was an Amaulis," answered Savinien, who was invariably surprised by the ways of Parisians. In the country, in such a case, bows were always exchanged, but these gentlemen had contented themselves with looking askance at one another. "Do you know him?" he resumed.

"Everybody knows him," replied George, drily; "he is about everywhere, even on 'Change."

"And at the money-lenders, it appears," said Savinien thoughtfully 'It is very strange! I thought that he was very rich. He has horses, urn-outs, and everything else. He lives in his mother's superb house in he Rue de Varennes."

"In Paris, my dear boy, no one is rich."

"Well, it seems everybody wants money."

"The proof of that is that we have come to Pinchard's. Let us go up, my dear friend. Time is passing by, and I don't wish to miss our man."

The steps were of stone with an iron balustrade, and dated from the eighteenth century. The money-lender lived in a house which had been built for some state-counsellor. On the landing of the first floor, the two friends met a young woman of fair complexion, elegantly dressed, who quickly lowered her veil on seeing them, and stole away, keeping close to the wall.

"That's strange!" muttered Savinien, "it seems to me that I have seen that face somewhere."

"I should say so, indeed!" replied George, in a low tone. "She was at the confectioner's shop, near the Bourse, when I called there for you. She is the little Countess de Gravigny, an intrepid speculator who operates through the agency of a good-looking clerk at Galipot's office. It seems that settling-day has been bad for her, as she is just coming out of the den in which Pinchard polishes off his customers."

"He lends to women as well as men, then?"

"Certainly, if they are desirable customers. It is said he has an understanding with the fashionable men-dressmakers to have the reliable women who have large outstanding bills sent to him to borrow."

Savinien thought to himself: "If Madame Montauron knew this, she would perhaps come to this fellow instead of selling her diamonds. This Countess de Gravigny could tell her all about it, as she is acquainted with her. They were talking together at the Ladies' Exchange."

The name of Pinchard was not displayed on any brass plate on the door of the office. This money-lender wished to be taken for a private citizen, and left signs and inscriptions to shopkeepers. Fougeray rang. A valet dressed in black opened the door and ushered him inside without asking him what he wished. This servant remembered faces, and recognised his master's customers, after once seeing them.

Viscount d'Amaulis admired the decorations of the reception-room, which was hung with Cordova leather, ornamented with modern pictures and decked with various choice bits of furniture. Nothing suggested usury. One would have thought it the sitting room of some rich connoisseur.

"What do you say to this room?" asked George Fougeray. "This doesn't remind one of the money-lenders of Molière's plays."

"Those of the present day live in better style, I admit it," said Savinien, "but I presume that they know how to cheat their customers quite as well."

"They do it in a more ceremonious way, my boy," rejoined George. "However, you will see for yourself. Pinchard is the politest and most accommodating man in the world."

The conversation did not continue, for the capitalist did not keep them waiting. The valet returned almost immediately to usher them in to his master's private room. They entered an office which would have proved suitable as a ministerial study. The ceiling was high, the carved-wood furniture rich, but all of subdued style, save an ebony book-case ornamented with brass. The person of M. Pinchard was not out of keeping with his surroundings. He was a tall young man of thirty or so, sturdily built, and dressed with extreme elegance; a little too fair, perhaps, but very good-looking. His features were regular and his face even pleasing. But there was a want of frankness in the expression of his eyes.

He was seated in front of a superb writing-table, on which he was gaged in arranging some papers, but he at once rose and came forward, ilingly, to greet his visitors.

"Good day, my dear Fougeray," said he. "I was expecting you."

"You must be a sorcerer, then," exclaimed George, "for I had no ea last night that I should come to see you this morning."

"I knew it after I saw Glebof. He was here at nine precisely."

"Then he told you how we were all fleeced at baccarat?"

"Yes. I know all about your card-party, just as well as though I had en there myself. I know so much about it that I can guess who this ntleman is," added Pinchard, with a bow to Savinien.

"You remind me that I ought to have begun by introducing my friend, iscount d'Amaulis," said Fougeray.

"I was sure that I had guessed rightly," exclaimed Pinchard. "Glébof ld me the names of the losers, and as I know all the others, it was enough r me to see this gentleman with you to know whom I should have to eal with. You are welcome, viscount, be good enough to take a seat; I n at your orders."

This opening annoyed Savinien greatly. It angered him to learn that ne story of his losses at play had been noised about, and the sweet anners of the mealy-mouthed money-lender appeared very suspicious to im.

"And so, my dear sir," said George, "I need not tell you what we have ome for?"

"Oh no, it would be useless. I know that you had both been very unucky, that this gentleman lost even more than you did, and that you have oth of you big gaps to fill up."

"You are mistaken, sir," replied Savinien, in a tone of vexation, "my aps are filled up, as I had the money to pay my losses."

"I don't doubt that, sir," answered Pinchard, eagerly. "When a nan has a name like yours, he does not play, unless he is able to pay all osses at once, and with a fortune like yours, a man is always able to come p to the mark."

"What do you know about my fortune?"

"What I know about that of all my customers. It is my business to know these things."

"Yes, yes!" interrupted George, who was afraid that Savinien might make some impudent reply: "we know that you have registers, and that your list of young men of good family is always made out to date. You might, if you chose, take the place of a matrimonial agent, and fathers before giving their daughters to high-livers, might write to you to inquire about the debts of the sons-in-law who are proposed to them."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Pinchard, "that wouldn't be a bad precaution to take; but I lend to other people besides young men."

"Oh! I believe that."

"I lend to mammas; I lend to papas; and you know very well, my dear Fougeray, that my conditions are as moderate as possible. To hear you, Monsieur d'Amaulis might think me a usurer, although I haven't the face, nor am I of the age of one."

"A usurer! For shame! You oblige your friends, that's all. But if you charge more than the legal interest, the Bank of France does the same, as it has, at times, raised rates of discount to nine and ten per cent."

"I see that you do me justice, and that you share my views as to

money-lending. Merchants go along in the regular way. Now, I am an innovator, and I don't recognise the law which has set invariable limits to money-lending. I set my price according to the solvency of the borrower, and my way is the right one."

"There can be no doubt about it," replied George, with perfect gravity, "and as we are both of us solvent, I hope that at this time you will not ask more than fifteen per cent."

"Impossible, my dear friend! Twenty is my lowest rate, and I have always put you upon the footing of the most favoured nations, as they say in commercial treaties. But how much do you want, before we say any more? I wish to know, as I have entered into three operations this morning, which have almost cleaned me out, so that if you want much——"

"Forty thousand, not more," interrupted George.

"For yourself? That is double what I can manage."

"For both of us. Twenty thousand each, then."

"No, no," said Savinien, hastily. "I need much less than that."

"Very well then, explain to me what it is that you wish me to do."

"It is the simplest thing in the world," said Fougeray, eagerly. "I will give you a note for forty-four thousand francs at six months, a note to the order of Viscount d'Amaulis, who will endorse it, and in exchange you must hand us forty notes of a thousand francs each."

"In that case your friend is responsible for the whole amount!"

"Of course, as I sign," said Savinien, drily.

"We can come to an understanding on that basis. The question of the date of payment remains to be settled. Six months is too long for me."

"I don't care to have so long a time either," said the viscount, who preferred to shorten the time for which he would be responsible.

"Would three months suit you?"

"I should prefer four," replied George.

"That is rather long; but I propose this: You shall sign a note for forty-three thousand francs, payable June fifteenth.

"What! June fifteenth? Why this is the sixth of May. That would make five weeks."

"Yes; but on June fifteenth we will renew the note for three months. You need not pay till the fifteenth of September."

"What a strange idea! Why not run the payments along from two months to two months?"

"For reasons that regard me alone, my dear sir, and which it is idle to explain. What does it matter to you whether the first payment is for the fifteenth of June or the fifteenth of August? I promise to renew the note, and you know by experience that I always keep my word."

"Oh, I know all that!" rejoined Fougeray, "but I am not the only person interested in the matter, as my friend endorses the note. What do you say, Savinien, to Monsieur Pinchard's proposal?"

"I say that you are free to accept it or let it alone," answered Viscount d'Amaulis, who thought himself bound by his agreement. "You know what we agreed to?"

George caught this ball on the rebound. "Well," said he, "three thousand francs interest for three months is pretty stiff—that makes twenty-two and a half per cent, my worthy Pinchard."

"Don't complain; I have just concluded two loans at twenty five and one at thirty, and on signatures that are as good as bullion."

"They are not better than ours; but, as we must submit to your twenty-

o and a half, let us end the matter. I don't like affairs that drag. Give a blank form."

"Here is one, my dear fellow," answered the discounter, opening one the drawers of his desk.

Savinien could not recover from his surprise on seeing George and nchard come in this off-handed manner to an understanding about a loan ich, in Brittany, owing to formalities connected with mortgages, would ve taken three months to conclude, and the confidence shown by nchard filled him with amazement.

"I should understand all this if I were rich," said he to himself, while ngeray was writing on the stamped paper: "but that a usurer should us accept the mere word of a gentleman as a security is simply tounding."

It renewed his astonishment to hear the money-lender say to him in the ost insinuating manner: "Now that our business relations are established, scount, permit me to assure you if you need my services for yourself, rsonally, you will always find me disposed to serve you."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, but there will be no occasion for at," replied Viscount d'Amaulis, coldly.

"Who knows? You go into the most varied kinds of society, and that sts a great deal, as much in the best as in the more entertaining circles, d even though one may have land one may be embarrassed for a time. that case, viscount, I am available. I flatter myself that many of your cial equals do me the honour of coming to see me."

Savinien said nothing. The boastful obsequiousness of the presumptuous low displeased him so much that he was anxious to sign and get rid of m.

"It isn't because I wish to see you obliged to borrow again," resumed e engaging Pinchard; "I wish, on the contrary, with all my heart, that ou may not again encounter at play such an antagonist as the Swede who rved you so badly last night. There is nothing to gain and everything lose with that individual."

"What!" cried the viscount; "you know——"

"I had the honour of telling you," interrupted Pinchard, "that efore you came I saw another of his victims, a Russian gentleman, who st less than you did, but still a large sum. Besides, I have known Count paranda for a long time."

"Bless me! have you, indeed? Well, what do you think of him?" ked Savinien, always on the alert to obtain information concerning his ugbear.

"I think that I wouldn't lend him a solitary copper. He knows that ery well: for, when he came to borrow six thousand francs of me on the ay after he arrived in Paris, I refused at once."

"He found the money elsewhere, as he has some. What is he, in eality, that fellow?"

"Bah! He is a man who lives expensively and derives his means from navowed sources. Some fellows of his kind have been rich, and some end y becoming so."

"To say the truth, then, Aparanda is an adventurer," said Fougeray. I thought so, and he will not be able to take me in again. But I must egin by paying him. Pinchard, my friend, the time has come for ounting out your forty notes! Make ready, while Monsieur d'Amaulis ndorses the note I have just written out."

Saying this, Fougeray placed the bill stamp before Savinien, and handed him the pen so that the sacrifice might be effected. Pinchard had risen to go to his safe, an imposing, monumental safe—which might have held millions in its bulky body.

There was no chance now of getting off, and Yvonne's cousin signed. It was done in a flash. Pinchard took the note, examined it with a sharp, quick glance, shut it up in his safe, and handed Fougeray the four rolls of bank-notes which he had taken out.

Savinien was now able to see, for the first time in his life, how much easier it is to make engagements than to keep them.

"Correct!" said George, tapping the money-lender on the shoulder, "you are expensive, but you come up to the mark in money matters, and it is agreeable to deal with you—when a man does not mind the cost."

"Oh, three thousand francs' interest need not trouble you. There's the Bourse, and you are one of the lucky ones."

"But not at baccarat. Ah! this is the last time I shall play against the Swede. Good-bye, Pinchard."

"Till we meet again," replied the discounter, with a touch of malice, "Viscount, I am happy to have made your acquaintance, and I have the honour of wishing you good day,"

He re-conducted the two friends to the door of his office, and the last words of Fougeray were: "Remember, it is clearly understood that we renew on the fifteenth of June."

"My word is my bond," majestically replied Pinchard.

At the foot of the stairs George said to his friend: "My dear boy, I will not insult you by telling you how grateful I am, but I cannot omit thanking you for the service you have done me. Without you I should never have done anything with that lynx there."

"What astounds me is that he should accept my signature."

"My dear friend, you don't know your own value. You stand high on the Paris Bourse."

"If I know why, I wish I may be hanged."

"But it is so. You see it yourself; and the other day, at the Bourse, you perceived what was your portion, in the estimation of the brokers, as the nephew of a landowner, and as one yourself. But let us speak of more practical and urgent matters. How much do you want out of what, thanks to you, I have just received? Four thousand? Five thousand? Don't be modest."

"Two thousand will be amply sufficient."

"Here they are," said George, unfastening two notes from a pinned roll.

"I will give them back to you in two or three days."

"Why? Keep them till the fifteenth of September."

"Not at all. I should prefer to have nothing to do with the payment, and I confess that I am not quite easy about it. If this Pinchard should take it into his head to exact his money next month, what would you do?"

"Pinchard is incapable of such a thing," replied Fougeray, "but if—which is impossible!—he should play me such a mean trick as that, I should sell my 'Ottomans,' and pay him, after boxing his ears. Let us go to breakfast."

"Thanks; I shan't breakfast with you this morning. I have some business on hand."

"The deuce you have! I didn't know that you were so busy. I hope that I shall see you at the club this evening."

"I shall be there at five, to pay Monsieur Aparanda. But I don't ink of dining there. Madame Montauron receives, and I promised her sband to go to their house."

"You will have a stupid time of it, I can tell you."

"Oh! I'm not going there for amusement's sake, but I must not fail in rtesy; and as I am going away, I shan't be obliged to go there again."

"Is it really decided that you are going to return home?" asked eorge, in a tone of concern.

"Yes, I have enough of Paris with its Swedes, usurers, and actresses."

"While you are about it, why do you not add: 'And of my friend eorge as well?'"

"Because I only say what I mean I have no fault to find with you, nd I shall often think of the pleasant hours which we have passed gether. Plouer is by no means gay, especially at night-time, when the ind howls through the great halls of the château. But I was born there, nd must live there, and I am obliged to confess that the air of this part the country does not suit my constitution."

"Nonsense! You are perfectly well."

"In body, yes, but my mind is sick."

"Are you in love, by any chance?" asked Fougeray. "Is it Anita or adame Montauron? She is still very handsome, your banker's wife."

"That may be," said D'Amaulis, "but I should never fall in love with Parisian woman. The women here are all too dangerous; they put me mind of a precipice. I should lose my wits, and that is why I long to eturn to country life. However, I am expected elsewhere at noon and ust leave you now."

"Which way are you going?"

"In an opposite direction to yours."

"Good! I understand," laughed George Fougeray, "and I don't ant to dog your steps. I shall probably see you at the club at five clock; but, in case you persist in your intention of burying yourself ive in the country, you must keep your last evenings here for me."

"I promise you that," replied Savinien; and, shaking hands with his iend, he turned the corner of the Rue Thérèse, and George refrained om following him.

This street, which, so to speak, led nowhere before the great improvements effected in this part of Paris, now conducts direct to the venue de l'Opéra. The Provincial Bank was not far off, and as Savinien id not care to reach it before noon, he had not need to make haste. He alked on slowly, thinking of the loan so quickly effected—the loan which ad given him two thousand francs which, had he made the effort, he ould have done without, and which held him responsible for twenty times s much.

He did not mistrust Fougeray's promises, but could not help thinking what might happen if, owing to events which he was not able to control, ougeray should not be able to pay at the proper time. It would be nough to cause an everlasting quarrel between the last of the Amaulis nd his uncle Trémorin, who would perhaps forgive his nephew for having pent a great deal of money, but never for having given his signature to a oney-lender.

It was, no doubt, rather late in the day to think of danger: but avinien was thus constituted, and his reason never spoke until after is heart had made itself heard. He had merely thought of getting his

friend George out of a scrape, and it was only now that he began to look fairly at the peril in which he placed himself by thus guaranteeing the payment, in three months, of a sum equivalent to his entire income for seven years. And, as he did not like to dwell upon painful subjects, he said to himself by way of dispelling the annoying thoughts on his mind: "George is a trifle reckless, but he is a worthy fellow. He will pay all right. Why am I worrying myself? I have enough annoying matters to think of without tormenting my head about what won't happen. I will begin by getting rid of Madame Montauron's affairs, and then all will proceed as it should. To-morrow, or the day after, I will draw out enough of my letter of credit to reimburse the hundred louis, which I only took as a measure of prudence, and I shan't have to think of Master Pinchard. In September I shall have my note returned, duly paid by George. I shall receive it at Plouër, where I shall establish myself once more: it will be a remembrance of stormy days, and may not be without a certain charm. When a man has reached port, he likes to remember the perils of a stormy voyage."

People always believe what they wish, and Savinien d'Amaulis by the time he had reached the Provincial Bank, was already quite easy in mind as to the results of his rashness. The building seemed to him less imposing than when he had first beheld it. His eyes had had time to become used to the dimensions of vast establishments, such as are seen in Paris, and the bustle of this market-like banking house no longer intimidated him.

He was not now embarrassed amid the crowd which filled the hall on the ground-floor, for he knew the bearings of the place, and was not sorry that there was so compact a throng, as he hoped that in the bustle he should pass unperceived.

He glided along between the groups of people, and being well acquainted with the bearings of the place, he speedily found the stairs which led to the desk of the clerk who had charge of depositors' cards. This clerk was alone when Viscount d'Amaulis entered the office, and he received him with the indifference usual to persons who do the same mechanical work scores of times every day. He asked for the ticket, and compared the number with that upon his books. But as he did so, he saw the name of the depositor who now asked to be admitted to the vaults, and his manner changed at once. He bowed politely to M. d'Amaulis, and begged him to be seated. Savinien made a gesture of refusal. He would have been glad to dispense with all these ceremonies which delayed him, when he was so anxious to finish with the business as soon as possible. The clerk rose, and applying his lips to an india-rubber tube, spoke to some one in another part of the house. Savinien recognised this manœuvre as one to which M. Bouret had resorted, but under present circumstances, it made him very anxious.

"What does this scribbler mean by what he is about?" he thought; "has he been told to let any one know when I appear?"

"All right, sir," said the clerk, after listening to a reply made through the tube, "you can go to the vaults. The way is free."

This reply reassured Savinien, who at once hurried off to profit by a moment when there was no one in the vaults. Still, before leaving the office, he could see that the clerk applied his mouth to another tube, and began talking to some one else, also in the distance.

"He cannot be speaking to the overseer of the vaults, as the latter has

t answered him," said the viscount to himself, as he went towards the
ircase. "I saw that he did not use the same apparatus. There are
idedly too many telephones in this establishment, and I have no fancy
such a number of speaking-trumpets everywhere."
He even asked himself whether it would be wise to proceed, but he
ected that it would be the same thing over again on his second appear
ce, as no one could enter the vaults unless authorised by the clerk.
sides, Madame Montauron could not wait as she needed her diamonds
t day, and he could not delay matters till the morrow. Besides, how
s it possible that the subordinate should think himself called upon to
his employers knew of the arrival of M. d'Amaulis, who, to him, was
rely a depositor like any other—a figure, a number?
It was infinitely more simple and natural to suppose that the clerk was
ng through these manœuvres with the telephone to speak about some
ier business matters: in an establishment like the Provincial Bank,
ere must be frequent communication between one office and
other.
Besides, the overseer of the deposits was walking about in front of the
ze, which he opened when the card, previously examined by the clerk,
s shown to him. At this, the suspicions of the viscount came to an
d, and he admitted that he had taken needless alarm.
The vaults were built in such a manner that a glance sufficed to show
at no one was there. It would have been impossible to hide one's-self in
s gas-lit hall, which had but four walls, all white with light, and
stitute of any apparent recess. Not the smallest nook in which a man
uld hide was visible, nor was there a corner unilluminated by the
zzling light.
Savinien, on his first visit had, at thirty paces, recognised Count
paranda by his attire alone. He, therefore, now entered without fear
meeting any one, and went straight to that part of the wall where he
ew that his compartment was located. He had his key with him, and
order to use it, he had only to set the letters forming the password in
ace, which could be done in four touches.
The compartment once opened, he had merely to take the casket out
d carry it away with him. Viscount d'Amaulis supposed that there
ght be some formalities on relinquishing a compartment for good,
t he thought that these could be gone through with later on, when
adame Montauron had received her casket.
Besides, according to the explanations given by M. Bouret, a subscriber
d the right to use the compartment rented by him as he pleased during
e term for which it was let, and could take things out and put them
ck as he pleased, fill the cavity entirely or empty it, without ceasing to
possessed of his rights until the end of the year for which he was set
wn as a depositor of the Provincial Bank.
Savinien at first thought of leaving the key in the keyhole on going off,
t he remembered the rules which the under-manager had explained to
n, and concluded that it would be better to close the compartment
ain after taking out the casket, re-arrange the combination letters,
d remove the key precisely as though he intended to return. The main
int was to operate quickly in order to avoid being seen, and to get away
soon as possible.
Viscount d'Amaulis found himself in precisely the same position as
me robber about to burst a safe open. "This is the result of bad

associations," said he to himself as he read over the numbers inscribed upon the brass plates. "I am reduced to hiding and escaping."

But this was no time for such tardy scruples. He soon came before the compartment numbered 919, and began to form the word, without which he could not open it. The word was Yvon, and Savinien, bending over the brass plate, and absorbed in what he was doing, had just placed the first letter under the indicating arrow, when a hand was softly laid on his shoulder.

It is needless to say that he straightened himself up very quickly, and on turning round, found himself face to face with M. Montauron. His stupefaction was such that he remained with open mouth and haggard gaze, like a robber caught in the very act of burglary.

"Excuse me, viscount," said the banker, smiling. "I ought to have announced my coming from afar, as I see that I frightened you by touching you."

"No, no!" stammered Savinien, "but you startled me, and——"

"Yes, I know! you are nervous. One can't control a start of surprise. But I must tell you why I came here, for I don't wish you to suppose that I amuse myself with terrifying the ticket-holders of the Provincial Bank vaults, or with spying upon them. Our meeting is the result of accident. I also, let me tell you, have hired a compartment in the vaults to keep my family documents, which are safer here than at my house, and which I don't disturb perhaps once in the course of a year. To-day, however, I have occasion to look at my marriage contract, and I came here to take it out. You know that with our system each depositor is obliged to open his compartment for himself, as he alone has the secret of the word."

These remarks only half reassured Savinien. The words, "My marriage contract," had an ominous sound.

"As I opened the gate," added M. Montauron, "I was quite surprised to see you; that is, both surprised and delighted, as I always think it a pleasure to meet you. I hope that you will do me the favour to come to my private room by-and-bye, but business first. You have come to take out the deposit you made, and I don't wish to disturb you. You were just about to open your compartment. Go on, viscount. Meanwhile I will open mine, which is near your own."

The viscount did not stir. He was leaning against the brass plate and trying to invent a means of escaping from his atrocious situation. To open the compartment in presence of the jealous husband would be equivalent to ruining the wife, for M. Montauron would no doubt recognise the casket. What pretext could D'Amaulis bring forward for not opening the compartment?

He had not yet recovered his composure, and he made the first excuse that offered itself to his mind.

"A most absurd thing has happened to me," he said, with an effort. "Would you believe it, sir, I have forgotten my word?"

"Indeed!" exclaimed M. Montauron, "I saw very badly, then. I thought that you had begun making it out. You had your hand on the first brass knob, I thought. I must be mistaken."

"No, I was feeling round in the hope of finding the letters by turning this knob, which was absurd, I admit, and I was going to give it up when you appeared."

"It would be better to try to remember the word."

"I have tried and am trying now, but it does not come back to me," terrupted Savinien.

"I will endeavour to help you. Let me see! You cannot have chosen ur chance letters. People usually choose a word easy to remember, the name of a friend. I chose the beginning of my wife's name, which Aurélie; I took Aure, just as you might have taken Trém, from inking of Monsieur de Trémorin's name, or else——"

"No, no!" said Savinien, quickly, "it is neither a name nor a rname."

"Let us think of something else, then."

"We shall never find it: when I forget, I forget entirely."

"The mischief! that's very annoying," said the banker. "It would e necessary to break the plate or burst the lock, and that could not be one without the permission of the Board, which would have to hold a eeting to decide the matter."

"Oh, I can wait. I don't despair of remembering the word again just hen I am not thinking about it. I know how I am. I am subject to idden forgetfulness, and then everything comes back all at once."

"When you recall the word again, you had better make a note of it," aid M. Montauron, gravely. "The plight in which you find yourself as not been provided for by our regulations, and whenever you wish to emove your deposit, we should be as much embarrassed as yourself. However, I am delighted to hear that you have no need to touch your noney at present."

"No, not at all," muttered Savinien, feeling sensible that the banker vas mocking him, and not knowing what to say.

"It is needless to remark," added M. Montauron, "that if you need n advance while waiting for your memory to return——"

"Thanks," interrupted Savinien, "if I do, I have my letter of credit."

"Even if that were overdrawn, I should be none the less ready to serve ou," said the banker. "Now I will ask your leave to open my compartment before going up stairs with you. It won't take me long, as I have not forgotten my word."

"Do so, sir, and excuse me if I don't go to your office with you. Some one is waiting for me."

Savinien, in stepping aside, as he said this, uncovered the brass plate before which he had been standing, and M. Montauron, instead of replying, leaned forward in the most natural way in the world to examine the alphabetical knobs.

"Look!" said he, "the first letter under the arrow is Y."

"I did not press on that," replied Viscount d'Amaulis.

"No, I suppose not," said M. Montauron, quietly, "it is chance that brought this Y to the top; but I make the remark to you to put you upon the right track."

"How, sir?" stammered Savinien, who felt more and more embarrassed every moment.

"Heaven knows how you will laugh at my simplicity, but I thought of a short name very common in Brittany, and which begins with that seldom used letter Y. Doesn't Mademoiselle de Trémorin bear the name of Yvonne?"

"Yes, sir, but I don't see——"

"The idea came to me," interrupted the banker, "that you might have chosen her name. It would be so natural!"

"But the name is much too long—there are six letters in it," said Savinien.

"Oh, you might have chosen the first four letters," urged M. Montauron.

"No! no! if I had I should remember them."

"That is true. Excuse me, viscount, for having detained you with idle conjectures. I should have done much better to let you go off, as you are expected. You are quite free, and you will excuse me if I don't see you out. I am awaited, too, and before going back to my private room I must do what I came to our vaults for—get out my marriage contract."

"Certainly," said Viscount d'Amaulis, hastily, "and I am going. I have the honour, sir, to wish you good-day."

"Don't forget, my dear sir," called the banker, "that Madame Montauron relies upon seeing you this evening."

Savinien did not pause, and even dispensed with replying to this reminder of the invitation which M. Montauron had certainly not articulated unmeaningly.

The young fellow only thought of getting away from the equivocal and ironical remarks of this husband, who undoubtedly suspected the truth, and already revenged himself in anticipation by making his wife's assumed accomplice ridiculous.

"I was not mistaken," said D'Amaulis to himself, as he went up the stairs four at a time: "the clerk who took my card had orders to let Monsieur Montauron know as soon as I presented myself. Montauron arrived here at an hour at which he is not in the habit of coming; he came expressly to wait for my appearance, that's clear. How did he know that I was coming here this morning? From that tattler, Monsieur Bouret, perhaps? Bouret, when he was joking last night about my losses, told me that I should no doubt need to open my casket to pay Count Aparanda. He may have said the same to Monsieur Montauron, and besides, if Monsieur Montauron thinks that his wife's diamonds are in my hands, he must also have thought that she would wish to have them out this morning, since he informed her that he should expect her to wear them this evening. This alone is enough to have led him to spy upon me. And, besides, why try and find an explanation? The unfortunate woman is lost in any case. Montauron has no proof that her casket is in the vault, and he arrived before I had opened my compartment; but he did not believe a word of what I said to him; and he will take such measures that I shall never be able to remove the deposit without his knowledge. Heaven knows how all this will end!"

These despairing thoughts occupied Savinen till a fresh incident interrupted him. While crossing the main hall of the establishment he came across M. Bouret, who was approaching in an opposite direction, and who, on seeing him, ran forward with open arms and a smile on his face.

"Ah, viscount!" began he, slipping his arm under Savinien's, "I am delighted to meet you. You must tell me how Anita's supper-party finished."

"Very badly," replied Savinien, who was enraged at being stopped by this importunate being at the very moment when he most wished to go off.

"You lost, then?"

"Everybody lost."

"I thought it would be so, but I don't care about the others. May I ask you how much the Swede won from you?"

"A very great deal of money."

"The mischief! I prophesied to you that you would leave your thers in that vulture's claws, and I reproach myself with not having isted upon taking you away with me. I saw that bad luck was about come, and I had made up my mind as to the so-called Count Aparanda. rtunately, you had your windfall on 'Change, so this loss won't uble you."

"I have only just enough to pay my debts."

"Oh, you don't tell me so! The blow was harder than I thought, then. eed not tell you that if you need any money I am at your disposal; but me give you a piece of advice."

"What is it?" replied Savinien, impatiently.

"I advise you not to pay this gentleman before I clear up certain tters which appear to me very singular indeed."

"How is that? Do you think that he cheats at cards?" asked the scount.

"I am convinced of it."

"It would be necessary to prove it, and that isn't possible. Besides, would not suit me to enter into any such matter as that. I have lost. much the worse for me. It remains for me to pay. Fougeray and the ner gentlemen will do the same."

"However, if they were positively certain that this gentleman were thing but an adventurer, leading a doubtful life in this city, they would, haps, reflect, and look twice at the thing before paying."

"What have you learned regarding him?" asked Savinien.

"Little, but enough to make me greatly suspect him. You remember, course, that when I spoke to him last night about his change of sidence he told me that he now lived at the Grand Hôtel.

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I had the curiosity to look into the thing. I have just come om the Grand Hôtel."

"Nobody knows him there, I suppose?"

"No, he engaged a room there, but he does not occupy it."

"That is certainly strange," muttered Savinien.

"So strange that I beg of you to mention the fact to your club com- ittee."

"I am not qualified to do such a thing; but it seems to me that you, manager of the Provincial Bank, can do so."

"What? summon him to tell me his real residence, or withdraw his eposit? That could not be done. This man rents a compartment in our aults for one year; he has the same right to it as you or any other epositor. He is at home there as he has paid his subscription. I have right to trouble myself about anything further."

"But if he should not re-appear, what then?"

"We should have no right to touch what he has deposited with us."

"Not even at the end of a year, when his term of subscription will e up?"

"That would be a question to be settled by the Board. The case has ot yet presented itself, nor do I think that any such particular instance ill occur. This gentleman does not certainly intend to leave such aluables as his chest may contain with us. I even feel sure that he will move his chest some day, and soon, too. Just now he is making a pile f money here in Paris, and he must be thinking of carrying his business

to other capital cities. Even if we were sure that he has deposited with us the results of a theft, we should be authorised in refusing to give the chest up. He might even—this is between ourselves—have it taken away by some one else, in case he had reasons for not showing himself."

"I beg your pardon; I thought that you once told me the reverse of that," said the Viscount d'Amaulis.

"When you came to deposit, you asked me what would happen if you lost your ticket, and if it were found by a robber. I told you that the robber could not use it to get hold of your pretty steel casket, even if he also found the key of your compartment, and that for a reason which explains itself—he would not know the word with which the door opens. But suppose that a depositor confides his card to a friend, as well as the key and the word, there would then be nothing to prevent the friend from taking out the deposited object and carrying it away with him. He would go down to the vaults alone, and do as he pleased there, without being prevented by any one."

"Even if the depositor were personally known by your clerk?" asked Savinien, whom these details interested much more than the under-manager supposed.

"In that case, the clerk who looks over the card might ask for some explanation, but it would be sufficient to show him an authorisation from the depositor. In point of fact this never happens. The bearer of the ticket is allowed to pass in. Our responsibility is covered by the mere fact that no one can guess the combination of letters by which the compartments are secured. But I am lecturing to you on business, and I don't even ask you if I can do anything for you here. You came, perhaps, for part of the sum mentioned in your letter of credit?"

"No, no!" replied Savinien, promptly; "I came for information, and some one is waiting for me on the boulevard."

"Then I will not detain you. Good-bye till I see you again, viscount, but take my advice and don't be in a hurry about paying Count Aparanda."

Savinien, freed from the under-manager's detaining arm, now hastened towards the exit. He was anxious to be alone to look into the chances that now remained of freeing Madame Montauron from the frightful situation in which the occurrence at the vaults had placed her, and he went away repeating to himself, in a low tone, certain words which M. Bouret had just said to him: "When a person has any reasons for not showing himself, he can have the object which he has deposited at the Provincial Bank taken away by a friend."

END OF PART I.

THE GOLDEN PIG;

OR,

THE IDOL OF MODERN PARIS.

PART II.

I.

MADAME MONTAURON'S champion returned home utterly discouraged and bewildered after the complete failure of his second effort on behalf of the banker's wife. Everything that he had attempted had failed, and it really seemed as if he were destined to achieve exactly the contrary of what he proposed. He had gone out with the intention of recovering the casket and borrowing fifty louis, and he returned, bearing the responsibility of a loan of forty thousand francs, not lent to himself; and besides, not only had he failed to bring the casket with him, but he had so mismanaged matters that its recovery now seemed impossible, for Madame Montauron's husband, put upon his guard by Savinien's awkward attempt, would in future watch with still greater vigilance than before.

Indeed, Savinien despaired of eluding the banker's watchfulness, and wondered when this painful complication of affairs would cease. Happen what might, it was now his duty to inform the unfortunate woman who had placed her trust in his efforts of the exact state of affairs.

Madame Montauron's messenger was due at three o'clock. He sat awaiting her. At three precisely there came a ring at the door in the hall, and he hesitated about opening it, hardly believing that Brigitte would appear on that side. It was she, however. He had never seen her before, but she had so much the appearance of a confidential servant that he did not need to ask her name.

She was a woman of fifty or thereabouts, whom nature had apparently created to be a lady's companion or attendant. Had she been born in Spain, she would, no doubt, have been the housekeeper of some rich priest, or the duenna of some young girl of noble family.

This elderly, discreet attendant was dressed in black from head to foot, and had withal a somewhat refined appearance. Savinien realised that she was a trusty servant, disposed to make any sacrifice for the sake of her mistress, and that he could speak to her with perfect confidence.

He began by telling her of his failure as to the recovery of the casket, omitting nothing and disguising nothing, and when his brief narrative

came to an end he asked her what he could now do, just as he would have asked Madame Montauron the same question.

The time for hesitation had gone by, and Brigitte, besides, must have some good advice to give.

"I foresaw what has happened," said she, without appearing greatly disturbed, "and if Madame Montauron had listened to me, she would not have attempted to recover her casket to-day. I knew that her husband would do as he did."

"You knew it?"

"Yes, for I am well acquainted with him. Since his suspicions have been excited he has not been the same man. It was Monsieur Bouret's giddy talk that did all the harm. Monsieur Bouret told him that you had deposited a casket at the bank, and that was quite enough to excite his mistrust."

"And now, no doubt," rejoined Savinien, "his mistrust has become certainty, for he did not imagine for a moment that I had really forgotten the combination word; he must have seen that I declined to open the compartment because he was there."

"That is very likely."

"I am surprised that he did not fly into a passion, and demand a thorough explanation from me," said the viscount.

"Oh! he won't do that till the very last extremity is reached," replied the old servant, "and he won't make any outbreak even then. He won't turn against his wife openly, or even question her."

"Is he afraid of her?" asked the viscount in surprise.

"No, it isn't that," said Brigitte, "but he loves her, he adores her; his only fear is that he may become too sure of her guilt. He tries to clear up his doubts, but also to deceive himself. Very little would be needed to reassure him, for he is quite wrong as regards the direction which his suspicions take, and he suspects the wrong person. He indeed suspects everything but the truth."

"You mean to say that he busies himself as to what he fancies is Madame Montauron's present conduct, and not as to what she may have done in the past?"

"Yes, and it would be easy to show him that you are not and cannot be the man who has destroyed his happiness. The danger does not lie in your direction."

"But what if Madame Montauron should appear at the reception to-night without her diamonds?"

"She will not appear. This morning I advised her to say that she was ill. I divined that you would not be able to bring the casket away."

"Did she follow your advice, which was very good, I must say?"

"She did not need to pretend to be ill, for she is really unwell. So much excitement has prostrated her entirely. Her physician was sent for, and he has ordered her to remain absolutely undisturbed for several days."

"That is very fortunate. She need not appear at the reception, then, even if Monsieur Montauron receives his guests under these circumstances; still, it is only a respite, and, besides, Monsieur Montauron may wish to see the diamonds."

"He won't venture to ask for them. It would be admitting that he suspects his wife, and as long as he is not quite convinced, he won't expose himself to having to blush for falsely suspecting her."

"At the same time," said Savinien, "it seems to me that he might easily find some excuse for asking to see the casket."

"It was at all times in my charge. So in such a case it is to me that Madame Montauron would refer him. I know what to reply, and I am sure that Monsieur Montauron would not persist in his questions."

"You partly reassure me," said Savinien. "The danger is no longer immediate, but the present situation must come to an end. Some day of other the diamonds will have to be shown again."

"Next Friday, most likely," said Brigitte. "Madame Montauron cannot continue saying that she is ill for more than a week. Besides, there are other reasons for bringing matters to a different position."

"But what can we do? If I return to the Provincial Bank, I shall fare no better. I must have been pointed out to the clerk who let his master know that I was there this morning. No doubt Monsieur Montauron wouldn't again go in person to the vaults to watch me, but a man in his pay might spy upon me, and after I had taken out the casket follow me."

"There is but one way," said the old nurse; "to send some one in our place. I have made inquiries on the subject, and I know that it can be done."

"Yes, I have been told that I can give my admission-ticket to some one else."

"It is only necessary to find some friend who can be trusted."

"That is all, and if Madame Montauron authorises me to do so, I will."

"There is no other way, and you are not obliged to tell your friend the secret."

"I have but one friend whom I have sufficient confidence in to trust with so delicate a mission, and he knows Monsieur Montauron."

"What does that matter if he is a reliable man? He could not betray you in any case, for he wouldn't know anything."

"He knows Monsieur Bouret still better than he knows Monsieur Montauron, and if Monsieur Bouret met him at the Provincial Bank as he met me this morning—when I was not looking for him—he would have great difficulty in escaping from him," resumed Savinien.

Brigitte said nothing. The difficulty appeared a serious one to her also.

"Has your friend any deposit at the Provincial Bank?" she asked, after a moment's silence.

"No, not that I know of."

"But he can make one to-morrow if he chooses?"

"Undoubtedly. The vaults are at the disposal of any one who wishes to subscribe."

"There is nothing, then, to prevent your friend from depositing a box there, even an empty one."

"No. It wouldn't be examined."

"He can take a subscription ticket, and as soon as he has one he can go and look at his deposit whenever he likes."

"Certainly."

"It will be sufficient, then, for you to indicate the number of the compartment where Madame Montauron's casket is placed and give him the key of it."

"I must, besides, tell him the word to open the lock, but that can be done also; and, as no one is watched, when he is once in the vault——"

"Yes," interrupted Brigitte, "your friend, instead of opening the compartment which he has hired, can open yours, take out the coffer, and

bring it to you. In that way, no one will suspect anything; whereas if he used your card your name would not pass unnoticed."

"Certainly not. The clerk, who has been warned, and who knows my face, would not let him pass, or—which would be still worse—would let him go in and arrange matters so that he would be found searching a compartment that does not belong to him. You are right; the plan you have thought of is the only practicable one."

"Madame Montauron will beg you to resort to it. If you don't lose any time you can have the casket in two or three days."

"To whom shall I give it?"

"To me. I can come here without exciting any surprise on the part of the doorkeeper. My sister, who is infirm, lives in the house, and I come to see her every day. The staircase which leads to her garret-room communicates with the hall there. I shan't be seen coming into your rooms. It will be sufficient for you to tell me at what time I shall find you alone."

"In the morning; ring twice in succession, so that if any one happens to be here, I may take precautions."

"I may tell my mistress, then, that you have not given up trying to help her?"

"Quite so; but I must ask you to tell her the name of the friend to whom I intend to apply. It is Monsieur George Fougeray. You can let me know to-morrow whether she objects to my employing him."

"I will tell you that, sir, and you may perhaps then be able to tell me something about the man whom you promised to question—the man who holds the honour of my dear mistress as well as her life in his hands?"

"The man! What man?" asked Savinien, who began to be confused by all these details.

"The man whom my mistress was going to see when she was obliged to take refuge in your rooms," replied Brigitte.

"You know all about that, then?"

"I know everything, sir. My mistress has no secrets that I am not acquainted with. Why should she have any? I was her foster-mother, and have never left her since she was born. I love her as though she were my own daughter."

"You have never left her, you say? Then you were with her in Italy?"

"Yes, and had she listened to me she would have spared herself bitter suffering. I advised her not to abandon her child. No doubt it would have been necessary to give up France and the circle of society in which she had always moved, to courageously submit to obscurity and poverty, and work to support her daughter. Still, that is what I should have done, for my part, had I fallen."

This was said in such a tone that it affected Savinien deeply. He realised that the woman before him possessed great strength of mind.

"Mademoiselle de Louvigné was not free to do as she wished; she was dependent upon a relative," he muttered.

"A relative whose frivolity and independence were the main cause of her downfall. Madame de Morvieux encouraged the attentions of that objectionable foreigner whom she scarcely knew, as she was not even aware that he was a married man. After the terrible consequences had resulted, she was extremely harsh in her treatment of the poor girl who had fallen a prey to this wretch, whom my mistress would never have known but for her cousin. It was Madame de Morvieux who forbade her seeing

ner daughter again. I offered to take charge of the child, but Madame de Morvieux opposed this, and threatened to send me away, so I was obliged to submit. I knew that a day would come when my dear mistress would need me. Besides, it was Madame de Morvieux who forced her to marry Monsieur Montauron.'

"My uncle took part in that also, it appears," said Savinien, in a low tone.

"Monsieur de Trémorin only knew a part of the sad truth. I came very near telling him everything, and have often regretted that I did not do so, for I am sure that had he known it the marriage would have been prevented. But what good does it do to revert to the past? Madame Montauron has expiated her fault in the most cruel manner. Her life has been incessant martyrdom for twelve years, and Heaven only knows what trials still await her. You are aware of the frightful danger to which she is now exposed. Her life is at stake, for she could never bear open disgrace. You may, I trust, be able to restore her diamonds to her and prevent an immediate exposure, but this won't save her, for she is still, and always will be, at the mercy of that man."

"That Count Aparanda? He must be an unqualified rascal."

"He is capable of any crime. He has only made his appearance in Paris to extort money from Madame Montauron."

"I thought that he had come here to bring her daughter back to her?"

"Say to sell her to her."

"What! to sell her?"

"My mistress hasn't told you all," said Brigitte. "It would have cost her too much to confess that the father of her child is simply an infamous scoundrel. But it is better that you should know what he really is, and I will tell you what he has done. Ever since my mistress has been married he has incessantly pursued her with demands for money. The pretext always was that funds were needed to support the poor child, who was living at Pisa, and my mistress was obliged to yield to this fellow's exigencies. Latterly, he has demanded more, and as my mistress could not satisfy him, he threatened her."

"How could he threaten her?"

"He threatened to take the child to her husband."

"He is a scoundrel of the worst possible kind, then?" said Savinien. "But I don't think he would dare do that. He seems to me disposed to lead a style of life here in Paris which would soon come to an end if any scandal arose."

"I think he has given up the idea of taking the little one to Monsieur Montauron. But I fear that he has another plan; that of hiding the child until my mistress gives him a sum which he has fixed upon: two hundred thousand francs."

"I am aware that, as she had not that amount by her, she was about to give him her diamonds. However, she believed that the money derived by their sale would help to make up a dowry for her daughter."

"Yes, that is what Count Aparanda declared he would do, and she believed him. He had no such intention, however, I am certain of that, and the proof of it is the way in which he has acted since he came to Paris. My mistress does not yet know where her daughter is. He promised to tell her if he were forced to leave without seeing her. He allowed her three days' grace, and, when, on the morning of the third day, Madame Montauron presented herself at the hotel at which he had put up, he had

just left. Indeed, it is all the better that she did not see him, as she would have given up her diamonds without even taking measures to protect herself from him, and without insisting upon having the letters which she had written to him restored to her."

"Ah, he has some letters, then? He would be very likely to use them, no doubt. But as for the girl I do not think that he cares to keep her with him."

"No, indeed! but he wishes to be paid for handing her over to her mother, and that is why he conceals her with so much care. Besides, my mistress is willing to buy his secrecy, and in order to do that, she relies upon your assistance, and the promises you made her."

Savinien reddened and hung his head. He greatly regretted that he had promised to play the part of an ambassador to so consummate a rascal.

"You have not forgotten, I trust," resumed Brigitte, "that you promised Madame Montauron you would question this man? But it isn't enough to question him. He wouldn't reply. My mistress, when she entreated your kind assistance, ought to have asked you to make a bargain with Count Aparanda."

"I should have refused to do so," answered Savinien, promptly.

"You won't refuse now that you know all. Her only hope is in you. She understands how repugnant it is to you to approach such a man, but the transaction will be neither long nor difficult to effect. It is only necessary to say to him: 'You shall receive the two hundred thousand francs which you demand when you shall have given up the girl and the letters.'"

"I think that I know where he has placed the letters," murmured Savinien, who remembered the Swede's visit to the Provincial Bank.

"Any other man would protest against such a proposal," continued Brigitte. "But I will answer for it that he will take the matter coolly, and instead of protesting he will make conditions. He will ask you when and how the terms of the bargain will be carried out, and you must tell him: 'Madame Montauron wishes first of all to have her daughter.' Let him begin by telling you where she is to be found."

"How will it be possible to know whether he tells the truth in the matter? Madame Montauron has never once seen the young girl since her birth."

"I saw her. I went three times to Pisa during the last twelve years. I know the girl, and she knows me. When I find her again I will undertake not to lose her. It will be enough for Count Aparanda to bring us together. When this is done, he won't be asked to do anything more till he receives the money in exchange for the letters written to him by my mistress. That day will soon come, for I hope that your friend will succeed in taking the casket away. When Madame Montauron has her diamonds, she will have some false stones set, precisely like her own. I have found a skilful and reliable jeweller. And when she has the imitation jewels, which will deceive any eye, she will sell her real stones. I have found a purchaser also. All will be ended in three weeks' time. Count Aparanda can surely wait as long as that. However, I have nothing more to say, Monsieur le Vicomte. It depends upon you to save my mistress. She is awaiting my return to know her fate, and I am awaiting your decision."

Savinien felt no eagerness to undertake this mission. Everything

about it was repulsive to him. How could he refuse, however, after having promised when Madame Montauron saw him? Brigitte's commentaries changed no part of the facts—although, they were useful, as they enlightened certain points which had hitherto been obscure.

Thanks to this truthful and faithful servant, the viscount knew that the Swedish nobleman was simply a swaggering bully, and that he had no need to be polite in dealing with him. Even a scandal was not to be feared, as Count Aparanda, by causing one, would lose all that he wished to obtain.

However, Savinien did not care to delay his own departure until the final result of the negotiation.

"I will do what Madame Montauron asks," said he, "on one condition, one only, which is that I shall be allowed to leave Paris as soon as I place her in possession of her casket."

"Nothing will prevent that. When this man has accepted my mistress's terms, I will undertake the rest. I will go to see him when you have found out where he lives."

"The question now is whether he will tell me, for I have reasons to think that he is hiding his real address. However, if he accepts the proposals which I shall make to him, he will certainly tell me how to communicate with him, and I will let you know to-morrow."

"My mistress will bless you, sir," said Brigitte.

And without another word she went off, leaving Viscount d'Amaulis very much disturbed, but less perplexed than before. He now saw what course to pursue in order to escape from the trammels which had held him in bondage ever since his arrival in Paris, and he experienced great relief at the prospect of a speedy adjustment of his difficulties.

He was expected at the Plungers' Club at five o'clock, when he was to deposit the money due to Aparanda, and he hoped to meet the blackleg who had despoiled him, as the count was not a man to defer the pocketing of his large winnings till another day. Savinien also hoped to find George Fougeray at the club, and arrange with him for the withdrawal of the casket. Three days ought to suffice for this business, as it would be greatly facilitated by the stratagem suggested by Brigitte. As soon as it was effected there would be nothing further to prevent Viscount d'Amaulis from returning to Brittany.

He dressed himself in all haste to repair to the club, and he had just placed the sum due to the Swede in his pocket-book, when a slight tap on the glass door startled him.

He had not forgotten his fright of the night before, and wondered whether this could by any possibility be Madame Montauron returning by the same path which she had taken on leaving him. This, in open daylight, would imply be an act of madness, and, besides, Brigitte had said that her mistress was ill at home and obliged to remain in her room. Savinien had drawn the curtains while the confidential servant was there, so he could not see the person who thus announced his presence or be seen by him. The viscount was now ready to go out, and might easily have slipped away by the hall, but curiosity urged him to find out who was there, and so he hastened to the window. He started back in surprise when through the glass he saw M. Montauron, smiling, and with a friendly gesture expressing a wish to enter. There was now, in truth, great reason for surprise and even alarm, for what could the husband wish with him after that interview of so delicate a character in the vaults of the Provincial Bank?

Had he changed his mind, and, instead of continuing to dissemble, resolved upon an outburst? Or, again, had he found out that Brigitte had gone to the Rue Rembrandt, and come with the intention of surprising her in secret converse with his tenant?

Whatever might be the case he must be admitted under penalty of exciting his suspicions, and so Viscount d'Amaulis opened the door at once.

"Here I am again," said the banker gaily. "I always come when you least expect me."

"You are welcome, sir," replied Savinien, somewhat reassured by this beginning.

"I was walking just now in my garden, and I took it into my head to call on you. You know that there is only an iron gate between our gardens, and I have a key to it. I scarcely thought that you would be at home, but I ventured to come, and I am glad that I did so, as you are here. I have come—excuse the liberty I am taking—to see how you are settled in my ground-floor rooms."

"I am very comfortably settled, I assure you. Do me the honour to walk in," said Savinien, who was not sorry to be able to prove that there was no one in the rooms but himself.

M. Montauron did not required to be urged, and began by going into ecstasies over the beauty of the furniture.

"It is very evident that you have plenty of good taste, viscount," said he, going from the bedroom to the dressing-room; "an experienced Parisian could not have done better."

"I did not choose the furniture myself," replied Savinien. "I bought it second-hand, and I had nothing to do with the arranging of it here. Monsieur Bouret sent me his upholsterer, who took charge of everything."

"Oh! Bouret knows all about these things! He is quite an artist, and I never fail to consult him when I purchase a painting or a choice bit of furniture. He is a gay fellow, too, and you well know that, as he passed the night with a merry set of which you formed part."

"He told you all that, then?"

"Bouret tells me everything," replied the banker. "He even told me that you lost your money to a foreigner who appears to him to be a suspicious character; and, by-the-bye," continued M. Montauron, without seeming to notice that Savinien's face had flushed, "let me remind you once more that I am at your service if you require any money."

"Thank you, sir, but——"

"Have you succeeded in recalling the word for opening your compartment?" interrupted the banker.

"No, not yet."

"Then you must need some money, as what is deposited in our vaults cannot be got out just now. It is money that you deposited, is it not?"

"Yes, yes, valuables," replied Savinien, hastily.

"Well, you cannot take them out till you think of the forgotten password, and this being the case, why do you stand upon ceremony with me? Tell me, in one word, what sum you need, and I will send it to you this evening."

Savinien thought that this was some trap laid for him by the financier, and he replied accordingly.

"I confess," said he, "that I had thought of selling some of the bonds which I have deposited at the Provincial Bank, and if the ridiculous situation in which my lack of memory places me should continue, I should

nd by being very much embarrassed. But just now I shall content myelf with using my letter of credit, which is far from exhausted, as I have carcely drawn upon it at all."

"Let me compliment you, viscount," replied M. Montauron, laughing; 'you show an amount of judgment which will guide you successfully hrough the temptations of Paris. It is certainly better to draw upon the ccount which you have with us than to borrow or even sell bonds."

Savinien bit his lip. He saw that the banker was right in thinking it nlikely that a man would effect such a sale when he had merely to sign is name to receive some money at once.

"But you were going out," resumed M. Montauron, "and I should be orry to detain you any longer. Will you go by way of my garden? It s as well that you should find out the way, as I hope that you intend to e neighbourly."

"With pleasure," replied the viscount, only too glad to shorten the nterview.

"You need not hesitate about leaving your window open, if you like," esumed the banker; "there are none but respectable people in the house, nd my doorkeeper is very vigilant. Are you satisfied with the way in vhich he waits upon you?"

"Perfectly satisfied; he makes a capital valet."

Savinien was about to add that he would not require his services very ong, but he reflected that this was not a time for telling M. Montauron f his intention of leaving Paris, as the banker would not have failed to sk why he was so anxious to depart. So he took up his hat and followed he financier through the superb park in which he had spent an hour with im some days before. Matters had greatly changed since their mutual xplanation concerning the Rue du Helder hotel, and M. Montauron eemed to have utterly forgotten it, at least he had never alluded to it since.

"You know that we are expecting you this evening," he said, abruptly.

"This evening!" exclaimed Savinien; "I thought that——"

He was just about to make a foolish mistake, but stopped in time.

"Did you hear any one say that Madame Montauron was indisposed?" sked the banker. "She is indeed so poorly that I have countermanded nearly all the invitations I sent out. However, we shall receive a few riends, and I hope that you will be one of the number. Madame Monauron insists upon introducing you to a young lady whom she is bringing ut in society, an orphan who has a dowry of five millions of francs. You vill come, will you not?"

Savinien was greatly tempted to reply that he could very well dispense vith the acquaintance of the young person who was so well endowed, but he thought it would seem strange if he refused.

"With much pleasure," he replied. "I was not aware that Madame Montauron was indisposed, and I feel much honoured at being included among the privileged friends who will be permitted to see her to-day."

"I cannot promise you that you will be greatly entertained," resumed the banker, smiling, "but later on we shall be able to offer you something to make up for it. My wife is about to establish a refuge for destitute young girls, and I think of giving a kind of charitable entertainment, the profits of which will be devoted to the institution. Such fairs are fashionable nowadays, and the most stylish women take stalls at them. The park here is large enough to make our fair a perfect success. You will come, of course, nd you won't regret it, for I have a surprise in store for you."

Savinien did not venture to ask what this surprise might be, but followed M. Montauron to the entrance of the flower-adorned vestibule near the main door. He then shook hands cordially with the banker, and went away quite quieted by this unexpected interview.

"It is very certain," he said to himself, as he walked towards the Boulevard Malesherbes, "that the sky is clearing. Madame Montauron makes this worthy man believe anything she chooses to tell him. She has managed so cleverly that she won't be called upon to wear her diamonds, as she will only receive some intimate friends. I trust she will take measures to enable me to communicate Count Aparanda's ultimatum to her. The husband does not appear to suspect me now. I really begin to think that, as he said, he only went to the vaults to take out his marriage contract."

With these consoling thoughts, Viscount d'Amaulis, his head erect, sauntered along towards the Madeleine. He lighted a cigar, and this is always a sign that the "tempest in a cranium" has come to a close, just as a rainbow indicates the end of a shower.

Savinien enjoyed his cigar to the utmost. Since M. Montauron had called on him everything seemed pleasant. The poorest tobacco seemed fragrant, the plainest women pretty.

He even consoled himself for his losses at cards, as often happens to players who can pay what they lose. The first loss is hard to bear, and they don't close their eyes on the night of its occurrence, but the wound is soon healed and hope swiftly returns again. The money left upon the table is nothing more than a remembrance, and what is due is paid without regret. The past is but a dream, but the future beams ahead, and it is on that future that the gambler relies.

This was not precisely the viscount's case, as he had resolved to play no more. He had reflected as much as he cared to about the amount lost to the Swede, and did not wish to play to make up for it. It had come from the Bourse; it had gone at baccarat. This seemed natural. He even felt freer in his movements since these chance-acquired bank-notes no longer belonged to him. He could now give his mind entirely to the work of saving the woman whose defence he had so unwillingly undertaken, but which had now become his special task, and in which he greatly desired to succeed. He flattered himself that he was now on the right road. Madame Montauron had a few days' respite, and the truce must suffice to enable her champion to restore her both her daughter and her diamonds. After this nothing need prevent the viscount from going to ascertain whether there would be a good corn crop in his own fields and those belonging to his uncle. Ever since Savinien had come to Paris, he had felt alternately the influence of the golden pig dangling from his watch chain, and the blessed medal given to him by his cousin. But just now the medal proved the stronger.

Five o'clock had struck some ten minutes previously when Baron de Trémorin's nephew made his appearance at the Plungers' Club, near the Opera House.

Savinien went straight to the managers and exchanged the signature of M. de Jancigny, Secretary of the Bank of France, for his own, as it figured upon the little strips of card which Count Aparanda had deposited in the morning. A gentleman so exact in depositing his I O U's could scarcely fail to appear to receive his money promptly, and it was almost certain that he would show himself before dinner-time. Savinien went up

and down the rooms looking for him. The time was a good one for opening a serious conversation with him, as there was scarcely any one at the club. In the reading-room only a few old members were nodding over the newspapers. Further on some others were playing a quiet game of whist; while two young men were having a bout at piquet in a corner. The Swede was not visible, however.

To make up for this, Savinien discovered George Fougeray and Glébof engaged in animated conversation at the extreme end of the furthest room, near an open window. They came up to him as soon as they caught sight of him, and Fougeray exclaimed: "You have taken back your I O U's, haven't you? I also have taken mine, and so has Glébof. We couldn't do otherwise, but now that we are all right I think that we ought to investigate the play of this gentleman, who throws down twenty good cards in one deal."

"You ought to have begun by that instead of electing him by acclamation," replied Savinien.

"What can one do? He had two backers to answer for him, but those gentlemen need some one to answer for themselves, it appears. The voting was regular. But that is no reason why I should keep quiet, and, indeed, I intend to call the attention of the committee to the conduct and character of this man."

"My dear friend, you are rather late with your suspicions. Not three days ago you were singing his praises, with the sole aim of getting *me* to join the Plungers' Club. If I remember rightly, you said that he was very rich, received in excellent society in Paris, that he was going to give entertainments——"

"It is possible," interrupted George, "that I said all that, but I have changed my opinion about him. Since he won all my money from me, I look upon him as a perfect scamp."

"You are, perhaps, going too far," remonstrated Glébof. "We believe that he didn't play fair, but we have no proof of it. I, to begin with, wouldn't have paid him if I were certain that he had cheated us."

"Bless me! neither would I. But as I have paid him, I have a right to feel a grudge against him, and I should like to see him driven out of the club," said Fougeray.

Savinien's opinion of Count Aparanda was the same, but he abstained from insisting upon the matter, as he felt that the expulsion of the Swede from the club would not mend Madame Montauron's matters. On the contrary, he greatly desired that he should be near at hand for a few days, until everything was settled, and especially until the execution of the treaty which he was about to make with this dangerous enemy. After that, it little mattered when and how justice was done.

"My dear George," said he, with affected gaiety, "we have twenty-four hours allotted to us to curse all winners, but I advise you to calm yourself and take no further trouble about this man."

"That is what I mean to do, for my part," said the Russian, "and I am now going to Anita's house to request her to refrain from inviting me to any more entertainments like that of last night."

"Let me advise you to add, that if she allows Aparanda to become an intimate friend of hers, all her other acquaintances will desert her," called Fougeray after Glébof as the latter walked out of the room.

"I was looking for you," said Savinien to George, as soon as Glébof, the Russian, had gone; "I have a favour to ask of you, and I——"

"You want a hundred louis more?" interrupted George, putting his hand to his pocket, "Here they are! here they are!"

"No, no. It is quite another matter. Let me tell you."

"Tell me, by all means."

Savinien's only wish was to make himself heard, for he had decided not to wait till Brigitte had consulted her mistress. Madame Montauron, who had already advised having recourse to a friend to withdraw the casket, could not take exception if Savinien confided this mission to his most intimate acquaintance. Besides, it would not be necessary to let George into her secrets. Only his personal assistance would be required.

"One question to begin with," said he. "Are you acquainted with the system of making deposits at the Provincial Bank?"

"In the vaults, with numbered compartments, and subscription-tickets? I know all about that?"

"Good! Then you have made use of this system?"

"Of their vaults? Never in the whole course of my life, for the obvious reason that I never had anything to deposit. I leave my money with Galipot, and have a running account with him. I take it out whenever I like. That is much more convenient than locking it up in a box, and stowing the box away in a compartment in a wall."

"I won't contradict that, but would you object to hiring one of the compartments in the wall to oblige me?"

"Would *I*? You've chosen the wrong man. I've nothing to put into it."

"You are not obliged to put any money in it. They receive deposits there without looking at them."

"Well and good! I might deposit my dressing-case and say that it contains a million in bank-notes."

"There's not the slightest necessity for saying anything about it."

"What good would it do you for me to act such a farce as that?"

"It would get me out of a very trying position. Fancy my having placed a casket, which I think a great deal of, in the vaults of these Provincial Bank people when I first came to Paris!"

"Bouret was chattering about that at the auction rooms and at Anita's in my presence. It is he, no doubt, who persuaded you to hire one of his holes in the wall. What is there in your box? Rent rolls?"

"No. Family papers."

"Or love letters. Well, what then?"

"I want to get back my casket."

"That must be the easiest thing in the world?"

"Yes, but I want to take it back without the knowledge of these people."

"What may that be for?"

"My dear friend, Montauron and Bouret think that I have deposited valuables. If I take out my deposit they will think that I am going to sell them, and that I am on the verge of ruin. They would perhaps write this to my uncle."

"Not a doubt of it! Bouret, after seeing you play baccarat last night, can have no opinion at all of your steadiness, I'll answer for that!"

"Never mind. I would rather that you should take out the casket for me."

"But, admitting that they let me do so, they would know that you sent me to take it out."

"No, for you would take it out without their permission."

"Come now! do you want me to steal? I warn you that I haven't the least talent in that line. Besides, having no false keys and no pick-locks——"

"There's no forcing open to be done," replied Savinien, "nor any need of a false key, as I will give you the real one."

"I repeat, then, that these gentlemen would in that case know that you sent me there."

"No, they wouldn't. You would see no one but a clerk, who, when you presented your subscription card, would show you into the vaults."

"Ah, true! I forgot that I ought to begin by 'subscribing,' that is to say, by hiring a hole in the wall to put my dressing-case in."

"You laugh, but nothing can be more serious. In the clerk's presence you need not mention my name, and nothing need be said about me."

"Well, we will suppose that I am admitted," said Fougeray. "I go to the vaults. When I am there, what next?"

"The next thing is, that, instead of opening the compartment which you hire for yourself, you look for the plate bearing number 919, you arrange the four letters which I will tell you, and which form the password, you pull the key, which I shall have given you, out of your pocket, and——"

"I put it into the lock, I open the door, I seize upon your casket, I close the place up again, I put the key back into my pocket, I take the casket under my arm, and I depart. That is what you want, is it?"

"Yes, and it isn't difficult to do."

"Difficult, no! But it is—what shall I say?—it is a compromising matter.

"Who would it compromise?"

"Both of us, and me in particular. If I should be caught at it what should I say? I should be asked why I was fumbling about a compartment that I had not hired, and why I was taking away a thing that did not belong to me."

"It is clear that you don't know how matters are managed at the Provincial Bank. You go down alone to the vaults, and not a being disturbs you while you are there. The overseer walks up and down at the entrance, behind a grating which he opens and shuts, but he never presumes to enter when there is any one in the vaults."

"But Montauron and Bouret, I suppose, have the right to enter whenever they take it into their heads to appear. The proof that they sometimes do so is that you are afraid of meeting them."

"Yes; for the reason which I have given you," said Savinien.

"Well," replied George, "I have another reason for not exposing myself to being seen there by them. I don't wish to give any cause for slander. You are afraid of being taken to task by your uncle. I have my character to keep. That is a much more serious matter. I am neither a landowner, a viscount, nor the nephew of a millionaire. I live on my good name and my good credit. The slightest hitch would upset me. And, I repeat it, were I surprised by one of these gentlemen, the story would go the round of all Paris; it would be exaggerated, embellished as it progressed, and, at the end of the matter, I should be looked upon as a thief."

"But even supposing that so improbable a meeting took place, and even if these people took it into their heads to accuse you, which is still more improbable, you could easily justify yourself."

"Yes, by saying that you requested me to take out the casket in a clandestine manner. You can see at once what would be the effect of such a confession. Then, indeed, they would begin to accuse you of dark designs. What wouldn't be said about this box, which must needs be taken out by a friend's intervention because you dared not take it out yourself? Supposition would become frenzy. It would be given out that the casket contained the head of some woman you had murdered," concluded George Fougeray, with a laugh.

"You refuse, then, to grant me the favour I ask of you?" said Savinien in a tone of vexation.

"My dear boy, I make you judge of the case. Don't you think that if I undertook this commission, you would run much more risk than you do now of annoyance? You vainly say that nothing would happen. Something might happen, and if I were obliged to enter into explanations with Bouret, for instance, who chatters worse than a magpie, it would make the very mischief of a talk, and that is exactly what you wish to avoid. You would defeat your own purpose by employing me. Observe, pray, that I don't make the least attempt to discover why you wish to remove this deposit so mysteriously. I am not inquisitive, but others will be less discreet if they are brought into the matter."

Savinien said nothing, He was far from feeling satisfied, but he realised that George was not wrong, and he feared to insist. He had already said too much, or at least enough to excite his companion's curiosity."

"Ho-ho!" resumed George, lowering his voice, "here comes that scamp, Aparanda! Take my advice, we had better make off. I would rather not talk to him, for I could not help giving him the benefit of my personal opinion as regards his card playing. Let us go to Tortoni's and take a glass of absinthe."

"You know very well that I never drink it," replied Savinien, who was desirous of profiting by this chance of an interview with the Swede. "Besides, I shall not dine with you. Monsieur Montauron has a reception this evening, and I have accepted an invitation to it. I shall lounge about here till seven, and then go home to dress."

"You must dine somewhere."

"No. I breakfasted very late, and the reception at Monsieur Montauron's house will be over early. I shall take supper when I leave."

"Well, then, give me the preference. I shall be at the club at midnight, and I will go with you to the Café Anglais."

"We will see. I can't promise."

"Oh! all right. You are vexed because I wouldn't do what you wish. My dear boy, you will some day admit that I was right, and I hope that you will give over sulking about it. Good evening. Try to entertain yourself at your banker's reception, and, of all things, if the Scandinavian proposes a game in order to give you your revenge, remember that you had better send him about his business. At least, that is my advice, and you will do well to follow it."

With those words George departed without looking at Count Aparanda, who had seated himself near the window at the opposite end of the room.

Savinien, left to himself, thought only of approaching this individual. It was not difficult, as the latter did not appear to be thinking of going off, but apparently waited for Viscount d'Amaulis to come up to him.

They were alone together, and consequently in a situation to talk without being overheard, and it depended on themselves alone to indulge

in a long and private conversation by settling themselves in some corner. Few members came to the club at that hour and the card tables were all in other rooms. Savinien, who was determined to bring matters to an issue with the man before him, walked straight towards him; and the foreigner, who was observing him stealthily, came half-way across the room and was the first to speak.

"Sir," said he, with a polite bow, "you had unusual bad luck at play last night, and I——"

"You, sir," interrupted Savinien, "had unusual good fortune. But it is idle to talk about it now as I have paid what I lost. I have placed the sum which I owe you in the cash-box of the club."

"I am aware of that, sir, and have just received it. I beg of you to believe, however, that had you required some days to pay me, you would have found me disposed to wait till you were fully able to do so."

"I beg of you to believe that I should not have placed myself in a position to be reduced to asking you for time. But let us leave all that, sir. I wish to speak to you of more serious matters."

This onset, which Count Aparanda could not have expected, made him very attentive. His eyes sparkled under their black brows, and in a second his face changed completely. His mobile and expressive features assumed an aggressive look. "What can you have to say to me?" he asked coldly, but not impolitely. "I confess that having had only passing relations with you I am altogether unable to guess the subject which we need speak of together."

"Personally, I have nothing whatever to say to you, but I have been requested to represent another——"

"In conversing with me?" interrupted the count, smiling. "You come as an ambassador? This is really doing me a great honour. May I ask you the name of the person whose happy thought it was to confide I don't know what matters to you?"

"I have occasion to speak to you respecting Madame Montauron," replied Savinien, looking straight in the face of the Swede.

However, Count Aparanda did not blench, or appear ever to have heard this name before. He asked without the faintest signs of emotion or surprise: "Do you allude to the wife of a rich speculator who is, I believe, at the head of a large financial establishment?"

"The Provincial Bank. Yes."

"I don't know this Monsieur Montauron."

"At all events you know, and have long known Madame Montauron, whose name before her marriage was Mademoiselle de Louvigné."

"I remember having met a young lady of that name twelve or thirteen years ago, in society, as well as at the house of a Madame de Morvieux, who associated with the foreign colony of Paris."

"Is that all that you remember?"

"Before replying, I wish to know why she has chosen you to question me. Are you a relative or connection of hers?"

"No, but——"

"Take care, sir. By confessing that there is no relationship between Madame Montauron and yourself, you authorise me to believe in a tie of another sort."

"Take care yourself," replied Savinien angrily. "Beware lest you insult a woman whose father was the friend of my uncle!"

"That changes the aspect of things" replied Count Aparanda, still

unmoved; "if your uncle was her father's friend it is quite natural that you should take up the daughter's interests. Be good enough to tell me what you have to say."

"Can you not guess?"

"Perhaps I can. But you will admit that it is not my place to say what it is."

"Be it so. I will speak clearly then. It was my uncle, Baron de Trémorin, who, twelve years ago, brought about Mademoiselle de Louvigné's marriage."

"Very well, sir. I am beginning to understand. I was not aware that you were the nephew of Monsieur de Trémorin, who, I know, in former times introduced Monsieur Montauron to his friend's daughter. Monsieur de Trémorin, it seems, has thought fit to tell you how he was led to make this match, and why he hastened the marriage."

"No, sir. My uncle is not in Paris, and he never mentioned Mademoiselle de Louvigné's name to me. But were he here it would be with him that you would have to deal, and I am acting in his place."

"Ah! I don't understand you in the least."

"What! You don't understand that Madame Montauron has told me all, and, in Monsieur de Trémorin's absence, authorises me to defend her?"

"From whom?"

"From you, who threaten her."

"Madame Montauron has deceived you, sir. I don't threaten her."

"A discussion on that point would end in nothing. The facts are these—I presume that you will hardly dispute them—you wrote to Madame Montauron that you were about to bring to Paris a girl who has lived in Pisa from the time of her birth, and whose existence is only known to her mother and to you."

"To me, her father," quietly replied Count Aparanda.

"Since you speak out at last, I will come directly to the point," resumed Savinien. "Madame Montauron wishes to have her daughter placed in her custody."

"*Our* daughter," said the Swede, by way of rectification. "It only depended upon her to take her. She did not do so, and I had reason to think that she had made up her mind to leave her with me."

"You cannot have believed so. You knew that she was not free to do as you say, and that she could not, without time, obtain the sum which you demand of her."

"I beg your pardon! I have asked for nothing. I wrote to her that the time had come for providing for the future support of our child. She is rich, I am so no longer. I waited for her to come to me——"

"Three days. That was very little. You did not give her one hour's grace. You left the Rue du Helder hotel without leaving your address."

"You once told me that you lived there. It seems that you saw me when I was leaving it."

"Yes, sir, and an hour after you left, Madame Montauron came there to see her daughter."

"How do you know that?"

"Madame Montauron was followed by her husband, and in order to escape his pursuit she was obliged to take refuge in the room occupied by me, a room which was directly below your own."

"Ah," said the count with a peculiar smile, "I now understand how it is that Madame Montauron confided her interests to your care."

"She simply requested me to inform you," replied Savinien, drily, 'that she would give you two hundred thousand francs if you restored her daughter to her."

"Excuse me! There is some misunderstanding here. This money is not for me. It is intended to be employed in constituting an income for our child."

"It would have already been handed over to you had you not disappeared. Madame Montauron was bringing you her diamonds in order that you might sell them. She failed to find you, however. Besides, you had promised that she should embrace her daughter, and her daughter never came to the Rue du Helder hotel."

"I did not promise to bring her there. I wrote to Madame Montauron —'Come, you shall see her.' This meant that I would tell her where she was and how she could see her."

"That was what Madame Montauron desired."

"Perhaps so, but I changed my mind."

"Do you mean by that, that you mean to retain possession of the child?"

"I have a right to do so. She is mine as much as she is Madame Montauron's, and more so, for she knows me only."

"Why, then, did you endeavour to get rid of her? Why did you write to Madame Montauron that you could no longer provide for her?"

"Because such was the case at the time when I wrote that letter. Madame Montauron, who has so fully informed you as regards me, no doubt told you that I had the misfortune to be ruined I have for a long time been living on the remains of what I inherited from my father, struggling against embarrassments of all kinds, and courageously endeavouring to build up a fortune again. In so precarious a situation, I did not think of keeping my daughter with me any longer; but I have never ceased to watch over her. I have often left everything to go to visit her at Pisa, where her mother abandoned her with mercenary strangers. I may be permitted to add that Madame Montauron has never once gone there."

"You forget that she is a married woman, and besides has never failed to provide for the child's needs."

"I forget nothing. I even know that she sent to Pisa a woman in her own pay, a servant who is acquainted with all her secrets. I don't say that she could have done more, but I believe that she could not have done less. I was obliged to allow her to defray her daughter's expenses, as I was almost penniless. The same is not now the case, however; I have won money at Monaco and in Paris, and quite enough to give the girl an adequate dowry, so I no longer need any one's help for her."

Savinien looked with anxious curiosity at the man who uttered this unexpected declaration, and began to think that, after all, it was not impossible that this adventurer should have the feelings of a father.

"You see, sir," resumed Count Aparanda, coldly, "that I don't make myself out better than I am. I don't fear confessing that I propose to constitute a dowry for my daughter out of money won at cards, and I admit this to you who have lost money to me and paid me a large sum. I have no reason to keep anything back after Madame Montauron's admissions to you, and I beg you, besides, to repeat to her all that I have told you. I can do without her help, and such is my intention."

Savinien could find nothing to reply to this clear and bold affirmation. Paternal right is not to be disputed, but the use which Count Aparanda

made of it seemed to him exaggerated, and after reflecting a moment he endeavoured to prove to him that such was the case.

"Ah! sir," said he, in a milder tone than before, "I understand your wish to give your daughter what you possess; but that is no reason why her mother should not provide for her as well, and give her what she can, and it is far from being a reason why you should deprive her of the happiness of beholding her child. It is not, I presume, your intention to take the girl away with you?"

"Not at present. I am not yet sufficiently sure of being always able to provide for her. A day will come, I hope, when I shall be able to tell her that I am her father, and introduce her into society, where I hope to resume my former position. Meantime she will remain where she is, and her mother can do very well without her."

"What harm has Madame Montauron done you, sir, that you should thus drive her to despair?"

"She has done nothing. It is precisely that which I reproach her with, and why I wish to punish her. If, when I came to Paris, Madame Montauron had made haste to come to me on my first summons, I swear to you that she would not now be obliged to demand her daughter of me. You will say that her husband was watching her, and that she was not free to do as she wished. But there are no obstacles in the way of a woman who has a mother's heart. What she did after several days' hesitation she could have done at once. When she came it was too late. She had wounded me. My resolution was taken, and I left the hotel where I had waited in vain. I thought that I should hear no more from her. You now tell me, however, that she wishes to see her daughter again, and give her a dowry. You speak of some diamonds which she was bringing to me to sell. Why did not she turn them into money herself, if it was really her intention to use the proceeds of these jewels for our child?"

"She could not do so, for reasons which you can easily understand."

"Well, let her sell them now."

"She will do so as soon as she knows where her daughter is."

"This is as much as to say that she mistrusts me. She declares that she wishes to give up her diamonds. I am not obliged to take her word for that! She brought them to my room, you say? I have never seen them. Where are they?"

"In a casket which she left in my room," giddily answered Viscount d'Amaulis.

"Then she gave them to you to sell?"

"No, sir. Besides, they are no longer in my hands."

"Well, then, if you have given them back to her, let her——"

"I have not given them back to her. I deposited them at a banker's, a house that you are very well acquainted with."

The strong language used by Viscount d'Amaulis, more than once, had not disconcerted Count Aparanda. This declaration, however, seemed to startle him.

"What banking-house do you mean?" he said, eagerly.

"The one that Monsieur Montauron is at the head of," replied Savinien.

"You have made a strange choice, sir. Why did you deposit at the husband's bank the diamonds which his wife was about to sell unknown to him? That was a singular idea."

"When Madame Montauron forgot her casket and left it in my room, I did not know what it contained. I did not even know who she was. It

may astonish you, but such is the fact, and I don't mean to waste time in telling the story in all its particulars."

"I don't ask you to do so. It is enough for me to know that Madame Montauron cannot dispose of her diamonds. It is very fortunate that her daughter is able to dispense with her assistance. I was right, a thousand times right, in placing no reliance upon her promised assistance."

"You are mistaken, sir. Madame Montauron's intentions are unchanged."

"Why, then, does she not carry them out?"

"She will do so as soon as I am able to place her diamonds in her hands once more."

"Why are you not able to do so? What prevents you from taking them back?"

"I presented myself this morning at the Provincial Bank to take them out. Monsieur Montauron made his appearance at the very moment when I was about to open the compartment where they are shut up. I thought that he had his suspicions and I went away. I know that he has seen the casket in which the diamonds are usually kept. But I have not relinquished the hope of being able to take them away."

"You will not succeed. If the husband knows where they are he must have told the clerks to watch you. Every time that you attempt to go to the compartment which you have hired, you will find some one watching you."

"I can send a friend in my place."

"The friend would need to be a depositor himself in that case, for the vaults cannot be entered without a ticket. If he appeared with your ticket he would be watched just as you would be And where will you find a depositor who will inspire you with sufficient confidence for you to tell him Madame Montauron's secret?"

Savinien hung his head and made no reply. George had just refused this delicate mission. Who could he find to replace him? The question was hard to answer.

"I am a depositor," resumed Count Aparanda, talking to himself, apparently.

"True," said Savinien, with a touch of irony, "we met at the door of the vaults. You came in a few moments before me and had just taken possession of one of the cavities in the wall. I hired the one which is next to your own."

"Strange things happen!" rejoined the count. "If on that day you had known that Madame Montauron's coffer was intended for me, you could have given it to me, and wouldn't now be trying to find a way to get it back again."

"I already knew that the coffer was meant for you. Madame Montauron, when she took refuge in my room, told me that she was bringing it to the person who occupied room 26, and when I met you in the vaults I recognised you at once as the person whom I had seen crossing the hotel courtyard in the morning. But I took good care not to give you the casket, although I did not know that there were diamonds in it."

"I understand why. You were not alone. That Monsieur Bouret who was at the card-party last night was with you, and he is extremely friendly with Monsieur Montauron. if I am not mistaken. The situation has changed, however. It merely depends upon you whether or no the casket shall pass into my hands without the knowledge of the directors of the

Provincial Bank. You are looking for a depositor who can enter the vaults and withdraw it. I am here!"

"Do you seriously suggest such a thing?" asked Savinien. "Am I to give the diamonds to you in such a way—diamonds belonging to Madame Montauron, and which represent a fortune, such is their value?"

"My daughter's fortune. Yes, sir; I am serious in what I propose. I am more serious than Madame Montauron, who affects maternal affection."

"Restore the child beforehand, or at least enable her mother to see her."

"Is this a condition which you propose to make?"

"Yes, sir. Madame Montauron wishes in the first place to know where her daughter is placed, and when she has embraced her, when she is certain that she still lives, she will sell her diamonds to constitute an income for her."

"You will never dare to reclaim the diamonds."

"I must take them back, however. I shall find some way or other. It must be done, as Monsieur Montauron has asked that they may be shown to him. When he has seen them, Madame Montauron must still have time to have false ones made to take their place. This must be done before she can dispose of the real ones. Such is the necessity to which she is reduced. You will therefore admit that she has a right to state her conditions to you, and you, on your part, have no motive for refusal. You know very well that she will not take her daughter away in spite of you. She will leave her where she is, if, as she is ready to believe, she is with a respectable person. But see her she must."

"I shall not oppose it when the dowry is paid down."

"If this is the way that things are to go on, you will never come to an understanding. You want the dowry. Madame Montauron wants the child. She even demands something more. She wishes to have back the letters which she formerly wrote to you, and which you have doubtless preserved."

"Yes, I have kept them. Not one is missing of all that Mademoiselle de Louvigné wrote to me in secret, nor of those which Madame Montauron wrote to me speaking of our child. Does she believe me capable of sending them to her husband?"

"I don't assert that she does; but these letters may fall into other hands than yours, and it is quite natural that she should ask them of you."

"It is quite natural that I should keep them. You may tell her that no one shall touch them. They are quite safe. I have deposited them in the vaults of the Provincial Bank."

"What! you chose the establishment which her husband directs?"

"You chose it to place the casket there."

"As I have already told you, I was not aware then that the name of the woman who left the casket with me was the same. You, on the contrary, knew perfectly well that Monsieur Montauron——"

"Had married Mademoiselle Aurélie de Louvigné. That is true; but I also knew that the directors of the bank don't require that depositors should show what they place there."

"I saw the enormous chest which you deposited. You will not undertake to say that it merely contains letters."

"It also contains my family papers, arms handed down to me by my father, costly books, and still more precious information, among other

nings the name and the address of the person who has charge of my aughter. If I die, Madame Montauron will inherit all this. By a pecial clause in my will I make her heiress of my chest and all its con-ents, and I have taken care to indicate the word which opens the com-artment where it is placed."

"That is a vile joke! You know very well that Madame Montauron ould be ruined if she undertook to claim this absurd legacy; it would be nough that her husband should know of this will."

"Oh, he will not know of it as long as I am alive—and I have no wish o die. But it is as well that Madame Montauron should know of my in-entions. Since you are her representative, be kind enough to tell her rom me that I am willing to give her back all that she asks for; all, you nderstand, but only after she has given me a guarantee of her intentions s regards our child. If she has, in fact, made up her mind to dispose of ner diamonds to constitute the dowry, I have told you how to get them back. You have only to tell me the password which closes your compart-ment. I will take the jewels out, and before selling them I will have mitation ones made, which I will send to Madame Montauron. The proceeds of the sale shall be entirely employed in buying an annuity in her daughter's name. She shall see the deed, and shall also see her daughter. I give you my word of honour as to that. Would you prefer to take out the coffer yourself? I hope, but don't believe, that you will succeed. Would Madame Montauron prefer to sell her diamonds herself? I also agree to that. I even admit that time is needed to bring all these different matters to an issue. I will wait a month or five weeks, if you like, even until the fifteenth of June. If, however, before that date I have not received the money which will secure to our daughter a competency, Madame Montauron will never hear of her again, or of me, for I shall leave France for ever. This is the last word I have to say on the subject. Be good enough to repeat it to Madame Montauron, and permit me, sir, to close this conversation."

With these words Count Aparanda turned his back upon Savinien, who did not attempt to detain him.

"That man is a scoundrel," thought Yvonne's cousin, "but he is also a great actor, for any one who listened to him would swear that he idolised his daughter and that Madame Montauron alone is in the wrong. But I have, in truth, done enough for her and I can effect no more as regards him. This evening I will give an account of my mission, and ask to be released in favour of some one else. Let her find somebody to take my place—somebody who will be, perhaps, more skilful and more successful than I have been."

II.

M. Montauron frequently gave balls at his superb mansion, and invitations to these entertainments, which were considered to be among the most successful of the Paris season, were eagerly sought after. They were highly thought of in the best society, for the founder of the Provincial Bank was not one of those chance money-makers who come and go like comets, leaving behind them naught but a fiery trail. His fortune, acquired by honesty and standing on a firm basis, placed him in the front rank of French financiers. His wife, through her high birth and her

acquaintance with the aristocratic set of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and still more from her personal good qualities, gave him precious help in establishing a good connection. She knew how to receive her guests, and this talent is every day becoming more and more rare. Good society is vanishing into the dim distance, and if vulgar freedom continues to spread as it does at present, behaviour suited for the tap-room will soon be the only thing that one will find at Parisian soirées. At Madame Montauron's, however, despite the manners which then began to prevail elsewhere, the tone of good society still reigned. Speculators of doubtful antecedents and chance millionaires were not admitted to her Friday receptions. Only moneyed men were seen there, it is true, but very serious men, picked out with great care, first-class bankers and directors of important companies.

It would be too much to say that this society was entertaining. But it was, at least, not tiresome. Madame Montauron did the honours with exquisite grace, and imparted a certain ease to the quietness of these receptions which would have otherwise been stiff and formal. She had even succeeded in giving them something of an artistic character. Celebrated singers and favourite pianists, actors who recited verses or played one of Musset's *proverbes*, were heard there at times. Savinien knew this, for after his first visit to Madame Montauron he had made inquiries, and on the strength of what he had heard on all sides, had concluded that an opportunity of speaking to her on the quiet would easily be found, as the attention of the other guests would be fully taken up. But now the programme of the reception was changed. The husband had said to Viscount d'Amaulis that on that evening, as an exception, he should receive a few friends of both sexes, and that a marriageable young lady would be one of them.

It would not be so easy then to speak privately, and yet Savinien had never been so desirous as now to have a final and decisive conversation with the banker's wife. It was necessary, above all things, that she should know Count Aparanda's ultimatum.

Viscount d'Amaulis put in an appearance at about ten o'clock, and found some thirty persons assembled in the drawing-room connected with the conservatory.

To his great satisfaction, his arrival passed almost unperceived. M. Montauron was in the centre of a group of men, who were discussing with great animation the politics and money matters of the day. Madame Montauron was presiding over a small circle of stylish-looking women, and talking, no doubt, of less serious matters with them.

Some of the men were walking in couples along the paths of the winter-garden; others were approaching the group of ladies with the obvious intention of joining them. No one was announced, and those who came in had the privilege of remaining unknown for a little time at least. Savinien profited by this to observe the most interesting of the guests at his ease before coming forward.

He, however, first looked at the banker, and saw with satisfaction that M. Montauron was quite unlike an anxious and jealous husband. He was indeed talking with his friends like a man whose mind was entirely at ease, and did not appear to think of such a thing as watching to see what his wife might say or do.

She was paler than usual, but Savinien had never seen her look calmer. He even detected an occasional smile as she conversed with those around her. He also remarked that she had chosen a style of dress which, while

y elaborate, did not require any display of jewels. As the season was tually over, it was now probable she would not be obliged to take her vels from their box till the winter again returned.

Guests entered through the conservatory, and Savinien had stationed nself near a clump of exotic plants, whence he could watch without ng seen. While pursuing his observations, he caught sight of a young d seated by Madame Montauron, and, near her, of a woman who was ning over some leaves of music spread out on an open piano.

The young girl was remarkably pretty: her style of face was Spanish, perhaps Oriental, the opaque pallor of her complexion lending won- ful relief to her brilliant black eyes and her lips as red as pomegranate ssom. The woman near by, on the contrary, had the light hair, insig- cant features, and constantly varying expression of the purely Parisian pe. She strolled from the piano to the circle of ladies, laughing, ges- ulating, and talking all the time. Savinien recognised her, as he had n her that morning on Pinchard's stairs, and a few days before at the dies' Exchange. He even remembered her name, which George Fou- ay had told him, adding a few comments thereto. He could well have pensed with meeting this little Countess de Gravigny, who speculated the Bourse, and borrowed from money-lenders. He foresaw that she uld be in his way, as she never stayed in one place, and would neces- ily interrupt any private conversation.

However, he now found it necessary to come forward from the spot ere he had remained for a time, and he made ready to cross the drawing m to go and bow to Madame Montauron, when he was discovered by Bouret, who was coming from the other end of the conservatory, and not fail to intercept his passage.

"What! all alone in a corner?" said he, laughing.

"I have just come," replied Savinien.

"So have I, and if I did as I liked I should propose to you having a oke at the end of the winter-garden, for I foresee that we shall have ging, and I loathe music. But you, perhaps, like it, and besides it is ispensable you should go and make your bow. I'm sure I can't see, vever, why it need be done. It is understood now that people can go , English fashion, from a room, without saying good night, and one ght to be allowed to come in after the same manner, without bending 's spine and paying compliments. Well, what must be, must; let us form our duty, then! Two together, it will be less irksome. We can tain one another."

"Before I go to the ladies I should like to know who they are, for I 't know any one here but Madame Montauron," said Savinien.

"I know the other ladies very little for my own part. Usually, on days, Montauron only receives gentlemen, and as I come on Fridays ne, I never see his wife's friends. I can, however, tell you who that utiful brunette is with such very fine eyes. She is Mademoiselle Julia ircas, an orphan, afflicted with five millions, which her respectable ernal relative left her on departing this life. Can you understand how s that so great an heiress should still be in the market?"

"Is there anything to be said against her?"

"Nothing whatever. She is charming, as you can see, and she is con- ered to be very intelligent. Fourcas, who conferred the privilege of stence upon her, was not of noble birth, and made his fortune on ange like so many others. His brother, who is the young person's

guardian, is still speculating, and must have a neat little fortune, which will, to all present appearance, also revert to Mademoiselle Julia, for the worthy man is a bachelor. I imagine, as he has brought her here to Montauron's to-night, that it is with a motive. There's matrimony in the air! Whoever marries her will be a lucky fellow. Ah! Montauron has spied us out. He is coming this way. You see that little, old fellow who is with him? Well, that is the uncle, the man who will manage the millions till the niece marries or is of age."

Savinien coloured a little. He saw that M. Montauron proposed introducing the last of the Amaulis to the last of the Fourcas, and the prospect did not entice him. It was necessary to submit, however, and he got through the matter well enough, being polite but cold; and, though he was unaware of it, this was precisely the correct style to suit the guardian, a suspicious individual, who did not like the young fellows who courted wealth.

"Are you a musician, viscount?" asked the banker, without urging the persons whom he had introduced to enter into conversation.

"A very poor one," replied Savinien. "It is just as much as I can do to sing in tune and play my own accompaniment."

"You will do us a great favour, then, if you will accompany Mademoiselle Julia Fourcas, who has a delightful voice, and whom we are all longing to hear this evening. See! Madame Montauron is looking at us, and I see by her face that she is thinking of the very thing I propose."

Madame Montauron did not confine herself to looking at Viscount d'Amaulis, as he stood talking to her husband, but rose and joined them. Her face bore no trace of the emotions of the last few days, and her manner, when accosting the pair, was destitute of the slightest embarrassment. One would have said, seeing her so calm, smiling, and playing with her fan, that not a cloud had ever risen on the happiness of her married life. M. Montauron, himself, appeared very pleased. He looked like the happiest of husbands.

"All goes well," thought Savinien, "in the best regulated family in the world, and I begin to think that there is nothing to prevent me from having a decisive confab with the lady herself. The husband looks too well satisfied to think of disturbing us. But if the poor woman knew what news I bring, she would be less calm."

"How glad I am that you have come, sir!" said she to Baron de Trémorin's nephew. "You represent youth here, and my friends have their eyes upon you. They are expecting you in order to have a little music, with or without the permission of the older people."

"My dear wife," said M. Montauron, "the older persons will be delighted to listen to Mademoiselle Fourcas, and Monsieur d'Amaulis is well able to accompany her. Ask her to sing for us."

"If you could induce her, sir, to choose something lively, I would be greatly obliged to you," said the uncle. "Julia does not care for anything but melancholy music. I have never been able to get her to sing me anything of Désaugiers' or Béranger's."

The speaker, who was fond of broad humour, spoke in a deep bass voice, which reminded one of the legendary intonations of "M. Prudhomme," and indeed he greatly resembled, physically and morally, the immortal type of Henri Monnier's creation.

"Fourcas, my good fellow," said Bouret, "you shock me! We are

ot at the Caveau here, and, besides, you are fifty years behind the times. t has lately become a settled thing that there shall be nothing in the way f music but serious music. Those who, like myself, consider it to be the reariest and most disgusting of noises, have a right to fly from it to the ery end of the conservatory, and remain there till it is over."

"You are both of you profane sceptics," said Madame Montauron. Come, sir," she added, addressing Viscount d'Amaulis; "come and let ne introduce you to Mademoiselle Fourcas."

Savinien took care not to decline this honour. He was conscious that I. Montauron had his eye upon them, and that he was being put to test. 'o fly from the charming heiress would be as much as to say that he was fraid of exciting Madame Montauron's jealousy by paying his court to er. The whole of this little scene had probably been prepared before- and by the husband, who thought that he was laying a trap for his ife.

"He will be well tricked," reflected Yvonne's cousin. "Jealous eople are really absurd. This man mistrusts me, and has no thought of ount Aparanda. He is not even aware of the man's existence, although ut a word from the count would destroy his happiness for ever. I thought rom his face that his spasms of jealousy had ended. That shows that ne can't trust to appearances! I must be careful what I do, as he will ave his eye on me all the evening."

"You won't be obliged to listen, gentlemen," said Madame Montauron o Bouret and Fourcas, as she led the viscount away, and crossed the rawing-room with him.

Persons who are walking side by side can always, no matter how closely ney may be watched, exchange a few words if not too near to those who re observing them.

"I have seen him," said Savinien in a low tone.

"Have you succeeded?" asked the lady in a similar tone.

"Not altogether. I have a proposition from him to you. But how nall I explain to you what he demands? We are watched, and it would e necessary for us to be alone."

"That is impossible just now, but I will find a moment's freedom efore the end of the evening. Until then, I beg of you to pay every atten- on to Mademoiselle Fourcas. You need not be pitied for being called pon to do that. She is charming,"

"You are still under suspicion, then?"

"I don't know anything about it. Monsieur Montauron says nothing ore respecting my diamonds. But his silence alarms me. I shall know o peace till I have them again. I live in anguish, for Brigitte told me of our failure this morning. Not another word now! Madame de Gravigny coming towards us."

The sparkling blonde had left the group of ladies who were clustering out the piano. She had evidently recognised Savinien, and wished to eak to him privately about their meeting on the money-lender's stairs.

"My dear madame," said Madame Montauron to her, "you remember ving seen Viscount d'Amaulis at the confectioner's on the Place de la ourse, when we were taking ices there the other day?"

"Oh, quite well!" exclaimed Madame de Gravigny, "and just now, nen you mentioned his name, I wondered why he did not bow to you nen we were in the shop."

"I had not then had the honour of being introduced to Madame Mon-

tauron," replied Savinien. "I had arrived in Paris the night before, and——"

"Oh, yes! you live in Brittany," interrupted Madame de Gravigny. "I cannot believe it, though people tell me so!"

"But it is quite true, madame. I am only a countryman."

"You don't look like one. Mademoiselle Fourcas said so just now, and we always think alike. But, speaking of Mademoiselle Fourcas, do you know, Madame Montauron, that she says she is not in good voice to-night, and is quite unwilling to sing. We are waiting for you to induce her to do so."

"I will do so," said Madame Montauron. "I am taking Viscount d'Amaulis to her expressly so that he may accompany her."

"It is all arranged, then. But I will leave you to tell her about it. Go, my dear friend, go and persuade Julia, and I will keep the viscount here," added Madame de Gravigny, laughing, "and give him back to you presently."

Savinien, who guessed what she was about to say, bowed politely and remained, while Madame Montauron went towards the piano. Everything had gone on in the best way possible, and this separation was calculated to make the husband believe that in crossing the drawing-room they had simply exchanged some of those commonplace words which are the current coin of conversation in society.

M. Montauron and M. Fourcas had joined the serious persons present, while Bouret, who was never serious out of his office, had gone into the park, where he probably intended to have a quiet smoke, far from musical young ladies and business men.

"The proof that you are not countrified is that you are discretion itself," abruptly began Madame de Gravigny "You met me this morning on Pinchard's stairs, and I am sure that you will not tell any one, not even Madame Montauron."

"I beg your pardon, madame, I don't know to what meeting you allude," said Savinien.

"Oh, you are *too* discreet, my dear sir! You saw me perfectly well, and so did your friend; I should be greatly obliged if you will request him to hold his tongue about it. Great heavens, yes! I *had* been to see Pinchard. Such is the result of having an avaricious husband! A woman may have a big bill of Worth's and count upon a favourable speculation to pay it, but, instead of that, find stock run down and everything flat. Then she naturally thinks of Pinchard, the fashionable money-lender. All my friends go to him at a pinch, and he helps them when they pay him twenty-five per cent. Isn't he square in money matters, that worthy Pinchard; don't you find him so?"

"But, madam, I——"

"What do you deny it for? I don't deny it! Pinchard is the man for an emergency. I don't mind heavy interest! I have a five hundred louis bet on Tristan, who will win at the Grand Prix on June twelfth, and I shan't have to pay up till June fifteenth."

Savinien did not know what to say, but he reflected all the more. He thought of this date, set by the money-lender for all the persons who had borrowed money of him, and he said to himself:

"This thoughtless creature relies upon a horse, and George upon his Ottoman stock. They may both of them be deceived."

"Don't be disturbed, I am as discreet as you are," resumed Madame de

avigny. "And now that I have enlightened you, let us talk of some-ing else, if you please. What eyes Mademoiselle Fourcas has! It's ally unfair to have five millions' dowry and such eyes besides. It's too uch! it's unjust! Besides all that, she is intelligent, sweet-tempered, d kind-hearted. It would seem as though all the good fairies had been esent at her christening, and the bad ones forgotten, for she has every od quality, and I don't know of her having a single fault. You will see r yourself, Madame Montauron is bringing her to us."

Savinien turned quickly round and saw that the moment had come for n to begin playing the part of a suitor for the hand of this young girl so chly endowed both by nature and her papa. He had but a step to make meet her, and went forward with a good grace, mentally asking his usin Yvonne's forgiveness for the farce he was about to take part in.

The task, it must be said, was far from painful. It the first place ademoiselle Fourcas was a beauty of a remarkable kind, a beauty who tracted every eye, and whose claims no one disputed. She had besides nat is much rarer than beauty, an attractive, sympathetic face. Under her circumstances, Savinien would have admired her very much, and ould have thought himself only too happy in pleasing her; but when ople are ordered to make love, they do it against the grain.

Besides, he was thinking of Yvonne. His cousin's sweet face appeared fore him, no longer sad and troubled as he had seen it in his dream, but th waving hair, rosy cheeks, and that look she always had when running out the fields of Plouer, with the breeze stirring the locks on her brow. e compared her with this young girl of another race, as it were, who sembled her so little, and the comparison was not unfavourable to ademoiselle de Trémorin. He could not however, but acknowledge at the heiress was dressed with perfect taste, and very discreet simplicity so wealthy a young lady. Her dress did not suggest her wealth, nor t was it like some school-girl's. Yvonne, who made her dresses herself, uld not have attempted to rival her in this respect. On this ground, deed, country girls are always beaten by Parisiennes. It must be con-ssed, too, that Mademoiselle Fourcas had an ease of manner only to be quired in Paris. She had the precise demeanour that a marriageable ung girl should have, without any excess of coolness or silly nidity.

In such a position young ladies just going into society often think it cessary to cast down their eyes, but Mademoiselle Fourcas did not con-rm to this ancient custom, and, indeed, it would have been a pity if, der pretext of modesty, she had veiled her sparkling orbs. She looked with a frank clear glance.

Yvonne certainly never looked down too much, but had she been put such a test as this she would, without doubt, have been somewhat em-rrassed, and perhaps would have lost nothing by that, as the simplicity innocence has its own charm.

"My dear Julia," began Madame Montauron, "here is Viscount maulis, who desires to be introduced to you, and will accompany you ou will oblige us by singing."

"What, sir, will you sacrifice yourself to please my friends and me?" d Mademoiselle Fourcas, laughing. "You undertake to perform perfect nance then, and I warn you that the gentlemen present will not thank for our music."

"I shall be satisfied if you are, mademoiselle," replied Savinien.

"I warn you, besides, that I am going to inflict old music upon you. Do you know any of Schübert's melodies?"

"I know them by heart. In Brittany the mind is naturally inclined to melancholy. It is the effect of the climate."

"Explain to me why it is, then, that I who was born in Paris only care for the German composers."

"It is the law of contrast. The street organs here play nothing but dance music."

"According to that you ought to admire it, as you live in a château lost in the depths of a forest. By the bye, is your château really lost in the depths of a forest or not?"

"Not exactly, but it stands on the verge of a wild plain, and the wind darting among the rushes never brings us Offenbach's music, I must confess."

"That is the kind of place that I should admire of all things! But I shall never go there. My uncle won't take me anywhere but to Trouville."

"It is nearer to the Bourse," said Madame Montauron.

"Yes, and it is more *stylish*. My uncle insists upon being *stylish*. Oh, what tyranny that idea of his implies. I wish that the inventors of the notion that everybody ought to be fashionable could be made to pass their lives in ball dresses."

"Really, mademoiselle, I did not know that you had such an inclination for country life," exclaimed the fair-haired Madame de Gravigny.

"Oh, it isn't the country that I care for, it is freedom. Here my life is regulated as though I were in a convent, excepting that instead of going to my lessons, I go into society. That is all the difference. Not a moment to give to my own fancies! Now, one of the things that I like best is riding on horseback. Well! I am obliged to ride every day at the same hour, at the same place, in that eternal Allée des Poteaux, as it appears that it is not fashionable to ride in the evening, because young women with dyed hair then drive round the lake in open carriages."

"Oh! I don't care for the yellow-haired women. I go where I please," said Madame de Gravigny.

"You are married, my love," said Madame Montauron, "and our dear Julia is only escorted by a riding-master."

"Who scolds me all the time because I don't keep my elbows far enough back—it seems that it is the fashion to do so—and there again you have the word *fashionable!*"

"We are no slaves to that word in Brittany," said the viscount. "I have hunted with ladies of high rank, who wore a goat-skin over their riding-habit."

"Down there, at all events, one can gallop as fast as one likes without running into a cab."

"Three leagues of heath from our manor to the sea, mademoiselle; and our ponies in Brittany are long-winded, like Arab horses."

"Oh, how I envy you, sir! How happy I should be if my uncle would only change his mind this year, and go to that part instead of some swell watering-place!"

"We have splendid watering-places near us," replied Savinien, who was not wanting in local patriotism. "There is Dinard, for instance——"

"Too fashionable!" interrupted Mademoiselle Fourcas. "I should like to have a sandy stretch reaching far away, or some black rocks with any amount of seaweed upon them, and not a stylish dress to be seen: not a parasol."

"We have all that too; but——"

"What would your guardian do, mademoiselle?" exclaimed Madame de Gravigny. "What would he do in that desert, so far from the Bourse and Champs Elysées? He would die of despair, unless, indeed, he played piquet with the village priest."

"I have no hope whatever of inducing him to go there."

"Who knows?" said Madame Montauron. "Perhaps if Monsieur d'Amaulis spoke to him about it——"

She stopped here to give Savinien an opportunity to speak; but he maintained a prudent silence. Mademoiselle Fourcas attracted him greatly, much more, indeed, since he had conversed with her, but he did not care to praise the charms of Breton country life to the wealthy citizen who mounted guard over the pretty girl. Besides, he was not at all sure that Baron de Trémorin would care to see the uncle and niece with their millions established, even temporarily, upon the beach at Plouër.

"No," resumed Madame Montauron, "it would be better for Monsieur Fourcas to go there of his own accord."

"To decide him to do so, mademoiselle," said Madame de Gravigny, "you ought to sing him something from 'La Belle Hélène.'"

"That would be quite beyond me, madame."

"But now I think of it," said Pinchard's fair client, "Monsieur d'Amaulis must go out riding every day."

"In the country I do so, madame, but here I have no horses to ride."

"That is a pity! You might have met Mademoiselle Fourcas in the Bois de Boulogne and taken her part with that tiresome riding-master who insists so much upon one's elbows being kept close to one's side."

"My dear Julia," interrupted Madame Montauron, to put an end to the giddy gush of Madame de Gravigny, "will you sing us one of those songs which you sing so well? I see my husband is impatient, and your uncle is looking at us. Remember that I have promised you shall sing, and that if you don't do so all my guests will be disappointed."

"Oh, not all," replied the young girl, smiling. "There are some who don't wish to hear me at all. I see that Monsieur Bouret has vanished."

"He doesn't like music."

"Then I prefer his not listening. I am ready, dear madame."

The piano was near at hand. Savinien led Mademoiselle Fourcas towards it, and the ladies formed a circle further off. They even began talking in a low tone, as it was not a celebrated singer who was about to make herself heard. All that was proposed was a little discreet music of the kind which admits of converse in a low tone, and even moving about, if not managed too noisily.

"What one of these 'Melodies' do you suggest?" asked Savinien.

"I should like to try the 'Erl-King.' It is too high for my voice, but it suits my mood. I should like to have some one tell me a ghost story to-night."

"In this drawing-room! It is altogether too light here, mademoiselle. Such stories don't tell well with a bright light in the room. If we were at Plouër, now, at the château in the Salle des Gardes, where bats fly about at dusk, and there are owls by hundreds, we——"

"Would you let me come to your château at Plouër?" interrupted Mademoiselle Fourcas, with a laugh.

This question, which was quite unexpected, surprised Savinien to such

an extent that he could not immediately reply, and under the circumstances his lack of presence of mind was equivalent to rudeness.

"Oh, don't be afraid!" resumed Mademoiselle Fourcas, "I have no intention of forcing my way into your castle, and should prefer not to make a breach in order to enter."

"If it belonged to me, mademoiselle," said Viscount d'Amaulis at last, "I would bring you the keys of the postern-gate on a golden plate, and I would kneel on one knee to receive you; but the château, if one can call it a château, belongs to my uncle, Monsieur de Trémorin."

"Baron de Trémorin? Madame Montauron mentioned him to me. I did not know that he was the owner of Plouër. Hasn't he a daughter?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"About my age?"

"My cousin is nineteen."

"Like me! I am sure that we should agree beautifully!"

"She is very bashful," remarked Savinien. "I think that she would be a little afraid of you."

"No, for at the end of a couple of days I should be more of a country-girl than she is. I suppose that she is acquainted with Paris."

"She has been here twice with her father."

"On a trip? She has probably been taken to visit the sights, then, and has been allowed an evening at the Opéra Comique? If she came here again I would do my best to get Madame Montauron to introduce me to her, and if Mademoiselle de Trémorin made a companion of me, or a friend, she would oblige me very much; it would, indeed, be an act of charity."

Savinien was about to protest, but the heiress resumed with energy:

"Yes, sir, of charity. This surprises you because I am rich. But you don't know what a life I lead with my uncle (who is one of the best of men, but whose ideas are entirely opposed to mine), and with an English governess whom I detest. When I go into society it is still worse. I am singled out for the attentions of a set of men who care very little for me, personally. My millions are the object of their homage, and I might be hump-backed, but all the same they would declare me charming. Not a week goes by without my being asked in marriage two or three times. I advised my uncle to take a secretary to keep a list of my suitors and number them in order. But I ought not to tell you my sorrows, and I must be tiring you with my lamentations, without mentioning that everybody is looking at us, and that if I continue chattering we shall be taken for a couple of lovers. You would be ranked among the men who have their eyes fixed on my dowry. That would be dreadful! Let us sing the 'Erl-King.' It is time we did. Here is the music. You need not turn the leaves, as there are but two. Sit down and accompany me very softly, if you please, as I have not much voice."

Savinien complied without a word. He would have been puzzled how to answer this talk, which troubled him, because it awoke new emotions. He had never heard a young girl speak in this way, and this style of talking, which had shocked him somewhat at first, no longer displeased him in the least. It had the savour of fruit tasted for the first time; it was frank, and the frankness was strengthened by a force of expression which the gentleman from Brittany had not met with before. His cousin was as frank, no doubt, but she did not know how to express herself in well-chosen words. Besides, vanity had something to do with the young

fellow's pleasure. Mademoiselle Fourcas judged him worthy of receiving these outbursts of confidence, and this was such a great compliment that he could not help being flattered by it.

Let those whose hearts did not beat fast when they were but twenty-four years old, and treated as a friend by a pretty woman, throw the first stone at our hero.

He was so much flattered, indeed, that he even played false in accompanying the vocalist. She sung in a rich voice of a delicious tone—a golden voice, as it were—and she thought of the words she sung, a very uncommon quality now-a-days, when young girls sing airs as they are taught them, simply to show the flexibility of their voices.

Savinien allowed himself to dream for a moment to the sounds of this melancholy music, which bore him away to an ideal world. He seemed to be listening to a Christmas carol, such as is sung in Brittany, and heard by him in his childhood. He no longer saw the banker's guests—Fourcas the uncle, the fair Gravigny, the financiers, the people he had previously met, "irregulars" and all; he thought no more of Madame Montauron or of her casket; he forgot everything, even Yvonne de Trémorin, who sang only hymns.

The melody died away in a note into which Mademoiselle Fourcas threw her whole soul, and the viscount, suddenly recalled from the ecstatic state into which her wonderful voice had thrown him, saw that she had tears in her eyes. A murmur of approbation was heard. The women were all under the spell. Madame de Gravigny, always demonstrative, applauded as though she had been at the theatre.

The groups of gentlemen at the further end of the reception-room displayed less enthusiasm. Their talking had not ceased for a single moment, and as Mademoiselle Julia did not sing at full pitch, they hardly knew when the music ceased.

Fourcas, who did not like sentimental songs, had, in order to show his disapprobation, assumed his sulkiest look and most forbidding manner. M. Montauron, on the contrary, was radiant, and this was not the effect of the German music. He had listened but little, but he had not ceased to look at the singer and her accompanist. He had watched their demeanour at the piano, and seen every gesture, every look, even guessing their words, without, at the same time, losing sight of his wife, who had brought about this interview with all the good grace in the world. From these observations he undoubtedly concluded that Viscount d'Amaulis, free from all unlawful claim upon his heart, would ask no better than to regild his escutcheon with the millions belonging to Mademoiselle Fourcas. He now threw himself with much greater ease and unconcern into the fulfilment of his duties as host.

The persons who regularly came to the Friday receptions frequented them in order to talk of money matters, for the American habit of treating business out of business hours has, of late years, become a French habit also.

At M. Montauron's house the greater part of the talk was of money-making. It was occasionally varied with other themes, but the price of stock on 'Change was continually coming in between an anecdote about boulevardian life or a bit of theatrical news. Important financial tips always carried the day.

At the moment when Mademoiselle Fourcas was sighing forth the last notes of the "Erl-King," the director of an important firm, who wished

to discuss some financial operations with the banker, came in, and M. Montauron, reassured as to his conjugal interests, was not inclined to lose this chance of watching over his financial interests also. He glanced at the circle of ladies over which his wife was presiding with careless ease, and, after seeing that Savinien and the beautiful Julia had begun their confidential conversation once more, he began to talk in the most animated manner with the financier who had just come in. This conversation became so absorbing that the pair went off some distance from the other guests, and finally decided to isolate themselves in the conservatory. This moment was seized upon by Mademoiselle Fourcas to put an end to a kind of privacy which propriety forbade.

"Enough of our fanciful talk," she gaily exclaimed. "Thanks to you, sir, I have been allowed to play the part of a truant from school, after a fashion, but it is time to go back to rules again. If we should begin indulging in Schubert's music again, my uncle would shut me up at home."

"Heaven forbid, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Savinien. "I should not see you again, in that case, and I hope that we shall again meet here."

"Next Friday and the following Fridays; that is the tenor of the invitations. A great fair for a charitable purpose is also being planned, and I expect to take a stall and sell cigars there. But I am really making appointments with you! This will never do! I am very giddy in my behaviour to-night, and I quite forgot to thank you."

"For what? For having played false notes while you were singing an adorable song in an adorable manner?"

"No; but for not having made love to me. I am not used to so much discretion, and I am greatly indebted to you for it."

A graceful curtsey followed this remark, which may well have had a double meaning, but Savinien had no time to ask for an explanation, as Madame Montauron now came up.

"You have greatly delighted us, my dear girl," said she to Julia. "If you don't go to Madame de Gravigny, to receive her congratulations, she will insist upon an *encore*."

"I will go to her," replied the young girl, and she tripped away as lightly as a bird flies.

"We have a few moments to ourselves," said Madame Montauron. "My husband is not watching us now. Speak, and speak quickly."

"What I have to say requires a long conversation," replied Viscount d'Amaulis.

"We have but a moment, I know," resumed Madame Montauron, "but you can at least tell me whether I may hope to see my daughter once more."

"Well, the count consents to restore her to you on certain conditions."

"Conditions! He dares to make conditions with me, he who has never done anything for our child!"

"He pretends the reverse of that, and says that he has always taken a great deal of trouble on her account, and even asserts that you have not helped him in his efforts, and that—excuse me if I repeat his words—never having seen your daughter since the time of her birth, you could not recognise her if he brought her to you."

"Coming from him, this reproach is an outrage! He well knows that I am kept away from her by ties which I cannot sever, and he well knows, also, that Brigitte went several times to Pisa. Does he mean

to try and deceive me in the matter by presenting me with a child who is not my own?"

"I cannot answer, madame; but this man has evidently some settled purpose, and I fear that your entreaties will not induce him to abandon any part of it."

"What does he demand?"

"He demands that the money intended for your daughter should be given over to him."

"To him? In order that he may deprive her of it!"

"He declares that he will use the money to buy an annuity in the girl's name, and that he will show you the papers. But he insists on handling the funds himself."

"Then you did not tell him that I had no funds?"

"Excuse me, madame, I told him all. You authorised me to do so. I explained to him what took place on the day when he left the hotel in the Rue du Helder. He now knows that you were bringing your diamonds to him, and that they were placed in a casket which remained in my hands. It is even, I believe, on this fact that he bases his demands. You intended to give him this money to dispose of as you wished it to be disposed of. He does not admit that you can have changed your mind."

"But he does not know where the coffer is?"

"He knows that I deposited it at the Provincial Bank, and that it has remained there up to the present time."

"Then he must know that you alone can take it away."

"I have tried to do so, but alas! I have not succeeded."

"Yes, Brigitte informed me that my husband came in just as you were about to open the compartment."

"Don't you think, madame, that he came there for the express purpose of spying upon me? He brought forward an absurd excuse. He said that he had come there to take out his marriage contract."

"His marriage contract! It is true that he had occasion to look it over to-day."

"Really! In that case Monsieur Montauron had a natural motive for coming, and he was not thinking of watching me. It must have been mere chance that brought him to the vaults."

"It may have been, but still I doubt it."

"Still, if this were so, there is no reason why I should not risk another attempt. Such chances do not occur twice. Indeed, I think it will be as well for me to try again, as I am in great trouble about the matter, and can find no one to take the casket away in my place."

"Brigitte told me that you intended to apply to Monsieur George Fougeray."

"I did so. I gave some insufficient excuse to him—I could not find a good one—in order to explain why I did not wish to remove this casket which I had myself deposited at the Provincial Bank, and he pretended to believe my reasons, inasmuch as he did not dispute them, but when I begged him to go there in my place, after doing certain things which I requested him to do, he curtly refused, saying that he feared that it would ruin his reputation."

"You think that he will not consent?"

"I am so sure that he won't that I shan't again attempt to persuade him, and I don't know whom to apply to. Another man has offered to do

what I asked of George Fougeray, but he is the very man of all others whose co-operation I would not for my own part consent to accept."

"A man! What man?"

"Count Aparanda."

"What! he proposed to do that?"

"To do all that was necessary to remove your diamonds. In point of fact, he could easily do so, as he has a deposit at the Provincial Bank. He has hired a compartment which is next to mine."

"What has he deposited there?"

"Letters which you wrote to him."

"Ah! this is the final blow!" murmured Madame Montauron. "My letters where my husband may find them! This is indeed fatality!"

"I don't know whether he is telling the truth on the subject," rejoined Savinien. "He declared to me, however, that the chest which contains this correspondence also contains other information which I fruitlessly asked of him, notably, the name and address of the person who has charge of your daughter. He even had the audacity to add that by his will he has left this chest to you.'

"He must have made up his mind to ruin me utterly!" said Madame Montauron.

"I remarked to him that you could not take possession of this legacy unknown to your husband. He replied that there would be no reason to do so for a long while to come, as he expected to live to a very old age, but that, for the present, you must sell your diamonds in order to assure your daughter's future. Without that he refuses to give her back to you. And as he is convinced that I cannot take the jewels away, he asks me to tell him the pass-word. He says that when once he knows it he will take the casket away without the knowledge of anyone at the bank; and, indeed, he could do so if I consented to what he demands. The clerks never saw him but once, and could not have paid any particular attention to him. Monsieur Montauron has never seen him that I know of. Monsieur Bouret, who met him last night at a card-party, scarcely knows him, and has no idea that I have anything to do with him, apart from the card-playing. Nothing, then, need prevent him from entering the vaults. He has not been mentioned by your husband to the head-clerk, and he can go in like any one else, and, once inside, the overseer at the gate will not know whether he opens compartment No. 918 or 919. Your casket can thus reach Count Aparanda without difficulty."

"But my daughter?" said Madame Montauron, in a voice choked by a stifled sob, "when shall I see her?"

"He swears that he will restore her to you, as well as your letters, when she has this annuity assured to her. He even undertakes to have false jewels made for you to show instead of your genuine diamonds."

"Do you advise me to accept this offer of his?" asked the banker's wife.

"No," replied Savinien, with decision. "I have no confidence whatever in the man."

"But if I refuse, what then?"

"He will not do anything. What he wants is the money for the dowry, and he will wait till he receives it from you."

"How long will he wait?" asked Madame Montauron eagerly.

"Till the fifteenth of June."

"And what will he do after then?"

"He will go away never to return, and without telling you where to find the child."

"The wretch! Then my only hope is in you."

"And I, unfortunately, am unable to help you."

"Why? A fresh attempt may succeed; you said so but a moment ago. It is by no means certain that my husband thought of spying upon you, and to avoid the danger of meeting him you can choose a time when you know he is elsewhere detained."

"It will be very difficult to be sure as to that."

"There are days when all his time is taken up in attending the board of directors. When these meetings occur, I always know of it the day before. I will let you know. I will inform you when you can act in all security."

"Excuse me, madame," said Savinien, who was very desirous of freeing himself from all further responsibility, "I have done all I could to serve you, but in the position in which we now find ourselves——"

"Go to Mademoiselle Fourcas at once, I beg of you," interrupted Madame Montauron. "My husband has returned from the conservatory."

And without giving Viscount d'Amaulis time to add another word, she left him and went towards a financier, who had not yet paid his respects to her, but was now being led forward by M. Montauron. Savinien was obliged to return to Madame de Gravigny, who was awaiting him in order to launch him into a flirtation with the young heiress of five millions. The countess had discovered that he had made an impression in that quarter, and conjectured that if she helped to bring about the match, she would further her own interests.

Yvonne's cousin did not attempt to draw back. The chat with the heiress, which the little countess dexterously favoured, gave him a deal of pleasure, and when he returned home he was much less desirous of going back to Brittany.

III.

It is much easier to form a wise resolution than to keep it. Savinien d'Amaulis had made up his mind to return to Ploner, and before Friday, the reception day, his plans were all made to start on the morrow or the day afterwards at the latest. And yet two weeks after the reception at which Madame Montauron had introduced him to Julia Fourcas, the young fellow was still in Paris.

This delay would have been unpardonable had he been expected at the château, but he had never spoken of returning in his letters, so as to avoid giving his reasons for going back. His uncle Trémorin did not expect him before the autumn, and if his cousin Yvonne longed in the depths of her heart to see him again, she did not dare to say so in the postscripts which she always added to her father's letters to him. Nothing, therefore, obliged Savinien to set out for Brittany, and the hurried departure for which he had made a few hasty arrangements seemed to him much less desirable than before.

Whence came this change in his ideas? He would have been at a loss to answer the question. The motive which he assigned to it in his own mind was that Mathilde Montauron needed him, and that he could not abandon her till he had restored the casket to her. He had promised

to do this, and, after all, it was his fault if the casket was shut up in the vaults of the Provincial Bank. It was his duty then to repair his blunder by taking the unlucky deposit out, and an opportunity for doing so had not yet been offered.

It had been agreed that Savinien should take advantage of the first enforced absence of M. Montauron to venture upon another visit to the bank, and he expected to be apprised of the opportunity by the faithful Brigitte.

Now, Brigitte, whom he frequently saw, had not yet made any such announcement. Not only was there no meeting requiring the financier's presence, but, contrary to his habits, he spent every day at the bank. He seated himself at his desk in the morning, and did not leave till the bank closed. So it was simply impossible for the viscount to go to the vaults without being surprised there, as he had been on the former occasion.

M. Montauron's present course was not of a kind to reassure his wife, for it seemed that he had taken up his post at the Provincial Bank for the sole purpose of watching over a deposit concerning which his suspicions were excited.

However, he had never been more affectionate in his manner towards his wife. He gave up nearly all his evenings to her, and never again mentioned the subject of the diamonds. It seemed, indeed, as though he endeavoured to banish all anxiety from her mind. She had not, however, received any company for a fortnight, as she was indisposed, and the season was now too far advanced for the banker to propose that they should give a ball. The charity-fair which was to be held in the park would not require any display of diamonds on her part. Women of good society do not wear diamonds by daylight.

There was nothing, then, to be feared as to her being obliged to wear them, but there was the overhanging threat of Count Aparanda, that he would disappear after the fifteenth of June without telling her what he had done with her daughter. Brigitte declared that he was fully capable of carrying this threat into execution if his demand for the two hundred thousand francs was not complied with, and as she firmly believed that he would keep the money for himself, she thought of thwarting his odious plans by having recourse to special means. Everything was allowable, she maintained, against such a man, and she had conceived the idea that he ought to be watched by a secret agent who, for a fixed sum, would inform those who paid him of all his movements. Brigitte thought that Count Aparanda must go from time to time to see the child whom he declared that he had placed in the charge of a Swedish lady. It was, therefore, only necessary to follow him about in order to discover where this lady lived, and then to mount sentry, so to say, over Madame Montauron's daughter.

But either the private detective employed was unskilful, or Count Aparanda had found out that he was watched, for nothing had yet been ascertained. The count led the most regular life imaginable. After his conversation with Viscount d'Amaulis, he had taken up his quarters at the Grand Hôtel, in a room which he had already engaged, but had not, till then, chosen to live in. He was in the habit of going to the Plungers' Club for his meals, the fare there being excellent, and he strolled on the boulevard or in the Champs Elysées. He also paid frequent visits to Anita, the blonde, who appeared to take up some of his time. In a word, he passed his days as do most foreigners having money to spend, and

who come to Paris to amuse themselves, without wishing to make aught but transient acquaintanceships.

The daily reports given to Brigitte by the private detective contained nothing which enabled the mother to find her child. The nurse, however, did not allow herself to become discouraged. She even thought that she would ultimately succeed, and when she saw M. d'Amaulis she never failed to entreat him to continue assisting her mistress till the casket was recovered. Savinien remained, and not reluctantly.

Since everything had assumed this commonplace quietude, he began to see the advantages of the absolute independence to be found only in Paris. He might arrange his plan of life as he pleased, and avoid whomsoever he chose to avoid. The first person from whom he escaped was, naturally, the suspicious character whom circumstances had thrown in his way. He had nothing further to do with Count Aparanda, He had paid his I O U, and had seen him, once for all, on behalf of Madame Montauron. In order to avoid meeting him again, he abstained from going to the club, or if, by any chance, he went there, it was at hours when he knew the Swede would be away.

The result of this, as may be supposed, was that he saw George Fougeray less often, and although their friendship had not grown cold, Savinien was not sorry to escape from the giddy whirl into which the young financier would have led him. Besides, George had again begun to speculate, and gave most of his time to business without attempting to lead Savinien into a similar course—and this perhaps because he no longer needed him to bolster up his credit on 'Change.

It will easily be believed that Yvonne's cousin had never again set foot in Anita's house. The mansion on the Boulevard Malesherbes had not proved lucky to him, and the people who frequented it did not attract him, especially Count Aparanda, who, as he learned through Brigitte's private detective, was now altogether in the actress's good graces.

As for M. Bouret, Savinien still met him, indeed, more often than he liked, for Montauron's double went everywhere and still persecuted the viscount with his attentions. Savinien had, besides, had an interview with him on receiving a fresh amount on his letter-of-credit, which was now nearly exhausted, for he had insisted upon returning the hundred louis borrowed from George. He did not wish to leave any debts behind him on returning to Plouer, and to prevent this he had set aside the sum which would be due to M. Montauron for six months' rent. This was an undue precaution, perhaps, as the famous Hôtel Drouot furniture was worth a larger amount, and he did not expect to take it with him to Brittany. But Savinien had learned from experience to guard against unforeseen events.

His connection with M. Montauron had assumed a very satisfactory aspect to all appearance. They saw each other occasionally, but not very often, sometimes in the park where the banker frequently received his intimates, sometimes in the viscount's rooms in the Rue Rembrandt, where the financier occasionally called unexpectedly. They had never alluded to the past, however, nor to Madame Montauron. But the banker frequently spoke about Mademoiselle Fourcas' attractions, and advised his young friend to follow up the acquaintance started in his own house with the guardian, offering to accompany him on a visit to the important personage who had at his disposal the hand of a niece five times a millionaire. Savinien showed little eagerness to follow this advice, however,

but he did not contradict the eulogiums bestowed upon the incomparable Julia, for he thought her charming, and she came into his mind much oftener than he liked. He even asked himself where it would be possible for him to meet her without paying her attention, which appeared to him unadvisable.

Ought it to be thought from all this that Viscount d'Amaulis was in love with Julia Fourcas? He would have been puzzled to say how far it was so. What he could not deny was that he often thought of her. She interested him as a new country interests a traveller. This, at least, was his own explanation of the feeling which she inspired, and as curiosity is a blameless passion, he had no scruple in satisfying his own. This it was not easy to do, however; a young girl is better guarded in Paris than anywhere else, for the chances of seeing her are very rare.

In a provincial town people of the same standing in society have the same habits and connections. They meet at every turn, at the houses of their mutual friends. There is the favourite promenade, the walks and public gardens—only the name varies—and it is enough to go out at a certain hour and direct one's steps to a certain spot to meet the young lady of whom one may be thinking, and exchange bows, looks, and even words, when her parents or relatives permit it. In Paris, however, there must be a neutral ground, unless one intends to begin the romance at the end, that s to say, by plumply and plainly proposing matrimony, which was certainly not Savinien's intention.

He wished very much to see Mademoiselle Julia again, but had no desire to pay a visit to her uncle Fourcas. He would willingly have accepted an invitation from him, but this wealthy citizen never held a reception. Dinners were the only entertainments he gave, and Savinien had no reason to expect an invitation unasked, while he could not, with propriety, intrigue to obtain one. He would even have thought himself called upon to decline the honour, had it come after a single interview.

Madame Montauron having ceased to receive on Fridays, for the time being, a second interview was not likely to occur again, unless it were brought about by the steps advised by M. Montauron, steps which Savinien considered might lead too far. He had informed himself as to the habits of the guardian, and he knew that while allowing his ward great liberty he did not take her often into public.

Theatres wearied this business man, and, besides, the season was drawing to a close. Foreigners alone braved the heat to go and see a play. Savinien thus had no chance of seeing Mademoiselle Julia in some box, with her governess on one side and her uncle on the other. In such a case, custom would have allowed him to leave his own seat, and call upon her between the acts.

There was, no doubt, an exhibition of paintings in the Champs Elysées, and Savinien had gone there more than once, choosing the most fashionable days to do so, but either fate had ill-treated him, or M. Fourcas held art in contempt, for the viscount had not met Julia there.

This was not an irreparable misfortune, however, and Yvonne's cousin had finally resigned himself to his disappointment. He had even begun to look elsewhere for some pastime, as he could not live like a hermit while waiting for Madame Montauron to dispense with his assistance.

He had begun to visit his relations in the aristocratic Faubourg St. Germain. He had frequently visited the Viscountess de Loudinières,

who had vowed that she would marry him to one of her friends if he would but pass a winter or two in Paris. The aristocratic heiresses whom she patronised had already gone away, and would spend the summer on their estates. For the time being, then, Savinien did not risk anything by frequenting the house of this lady, who had a positive passion for making matches, and who welcomed him warmly, besides being an agreeable companion in spite of her advanced age.

His other cousin, the Marchioness de Laffemas, who lived a very retired life, made much less of him. With her, conversation consisted of the dreariest commonplace chatter. Every time he saw her he was obliged to listen to the genealogy of the Amaulis family, to which she belonged, and when she had gone over the subject of their intermarrying with the Laffemas, she would retire to feed her pug-dog, who was dying of old age.

Her son Adhémar was not at all like his mother, however, and Savinien greatly preferred him. At first he had been repelled by his mania for sport, but little by little he had become accustomed to it, and was now fond of the races himself. Now, Savinien had no aristocratic prejudices whatever, and had shown this by keeping up his acquaintance with George Fougeray, who had no relations, either far or near, among the nobility. But a man cannot belong to the time-honoured nobility of Brittany without being in some degree influenced by the fact. Born with old royalist blood in his veins, and brought up by his uncle Trémorin, who was very absolute in everything, Viscount d'Amaulis could not depart from the laws laid down by his ancestors as to social matters, and he had a natural preference for the companionship of those who were his equals in birth.

No doubt his stay at the Rennes law-school had sufficed to imbue his mind with progressive ideas, and his sojourn in Paris was not calculated to bring him back to the feelings of feudal times, as since his arrival he had found himself among people who were altogether on a footing of equality. Circumstances had thrown him into a world in which *parvenus* and girls born in a doorkeeper's lodge were frequently met with in conspicuous situations. He had been to the Bourse, and had admired the wit and beauty of Mademoiselle Julia Fourcas, the daughter of a moneyed man. But he felt much more at ease with the Marquis of Laffemas than with George's friends, and he and his cousin agreed on many subjects, though not on all. He felt grateful to him for treating him as a relative, although he had come straight from a country home, and had not fortune enough to make up for his countified blunders. He had been especially flattered by being proposed at the Jockey Club, and although he did not expect to make frequent use of the advantages arising from being admitted into this privileged circle, he still greatly desired to become a member.

Even though a man be destined to live in a retired chateau, he is not sorry when he visits Paris to be able to show himself upon the balcony of his club-house, and to have at the races a seat on the stand reserved to the members of the "Jockey." It was for these reasons that Savinien d'Amaulis now saw Adhémar de Laffemas almost every day, and the latter made no small sacrifice in giving up a portion of his time to him instead of disposing of it in his usual way.

Nothing, certainly, is less easy than to accommodate one's self to a friend who is not acquainted in one's own social circle. The marquis, however, had found a way which was not within the reach of everybody. He had half a dozen horses in his stables, without counting, it is needless to say, the respectable looking old mares which dragged his mother's carriage

about, and there was not a morning that he did not take a ride in the Bois de Boulogne.

This ride was almost indispensable in the sporting world, and M. de Laffemas was among those who appeared most often along the fashionable Bois. He had not at first asked Savinien to accompany him. A man who has a good knowledge of horses, and is fond of them, does not lend his own animals to the first comer, nor even to a friend, unless he be certain that this friend knows how to ride. However, the marquis had taken an ingenious way to find out whether Savinien had any knowledge of horsemanship, and had done this without wounding his young cousin's self-love.

Under pretence of asking his advice as to a horse for every-day use, which he had just bought, he had begged him to try it in the grounds adjoining the marchioness's house. The result had been altogether satisfactory. Savinien was not what is called a showy rider, with that certain easy way of sitting, which is acquired by frequenting fashionable rides, and which very poor horsemen often possess. But his hand was steady, his knees like steel, and it was impossible to throw him. After the first test, Adhémar saw that he could trust him with his best horses without any risk of their being spoiled. So he now proposed that they should ride out together, and this offer was joyfully accepted by Viscount d'Amaulis, who at Plouër passed half his time galloping across country. Then, as a real gentleman never does things half-way, M. de Laffemas sent a horse and groom to M. d'Amaulis' door every day.

Savinien had thus the pleasure, which he highly appreciated, of riding a fresh horse each morning, and he did so to his heart's content. He met his cousin in the Bois de Boulogne, and after a long ride, of which they varied the pace, they returned to the house in the Rue de Varennes, where the dowager marchioness sometimes invited the young nobleman from Brittany to remain and breakfast with her.

It was in this way that Savinien, one day late in May, happened to be coming down the Avenue de l'Impératrice at a rapid trot, riding a chestnut, which he sat for the first time, and which he had not yet thoroughly broken in. This chestnut was a half-bred, which the Marquis Adhémar had recently purchased, and which he did not ride, he said, without being on his guard, as it was frisky. It had even a trick of shying, which is a bad vice for a saddle horse. He had kept it till the last in the trials to which he had subjected his young friend Viscount d'Amaulis, and it was not without some apprehension that he had trusted it to him.

Savinien, warned beforehand that he had to deal with an animal which was hard to manage, was careful not to decline the test. He felt that he was fully able to subdue the beast, and was not sorry to be able to show his cousin that Breton gentlemen are not afraid of horses which are difficult to manage. After a short conversation with the groom, in order to find out the disposition of Trevelyan—such was the name of the troublesome steed—the viscount boldly mounted him before the door of the house in the Rue Rembrandt, which, it being an early hour, was almost deserted.

The doorkeeper, who was also Savinien's valet, and who at the moment was smoking his pipe in the courtyard, was present, however, and beheld the viscount and his horse struggling for mastery. The struggle was a warm one, but the rider succeeded in conquering, although he was not accustomed to the slippery saddles which are the fashion now for stylish riders, and which dispense with the pad supporting the top of the knee Riders of high fashion would laugh at its use at the present time,

At Plouër, however, Savinien had been in the habit of using a good old-fashioned saddle, upon which he was literally screwed down, so that the first few starts of the chestnut somewhat jostled him, but he soon recovered a firm seat. From his earliest childhood he had galloped about upon bare-backed ponies with long manes, such as belong to Brittany, and his mad races across country had accustomed him to the most reckless riding. So he soon brought Trevelyan to terms and made him proceed, not without curveting, however, towards the Boulevard de Courcelles, intending to finish subduing him quite at his ease.

He wished to do this before reaching the Bois, where the crowd would have hampered him; and as the tricky animal still manifested an intention to misbehave himself, Savinien, when he reached the ascent of the Avenue de Wagram, let him go at full speed. At the Arc de Triomphe, Trevelyan, quite blown by a gallop at a rapid rate up this steep road, already began to be more reasonable, and a trot along the Avenue de l'Impératrice calmed him completely.

When he passed the Port Dauphine he was as meek as a lamb. At this point the viscount knew which way to turn, being already Parisian enough to know the good roads. It was nine o'clock, and in the morning no one rides near the lake or the Acacia Avenue. All riders who conform to the rules of fashion take the Allée des Poteaux, and carriages proceed along the road to the Pré Catelan. The two avenues cross at a few hundred yards from the entrance of the Bois, and agreeable meetings often take place at this juncture. The riders on horseback keep along beside the carriages or traps driven by ladies themselves. Sometimes ladies alight, and the riders do the same, and walk in couples over the grass or under the trees. All this affords a charming picture to the looker-on. And as many people are acquainted with each other, conversation goes on as freely as in a drawing-room.

However, this freedom of intercourse does not begin till between ten and eleven, and when Savinien appeared on the privileged road there were none but some sober-minded people riding for the pleasure of riding rather than to show themselves. There were a few ladies, but they passed rapidly by, profiting by the free state of the road to indulge in a rapid canter. At a later hour, when the avenue is crowded, it is necessary to walk your horse. The viscount, who liked to ride fast, did so early.

The two cousins always ended by joining one another, but they had no fixed place for meeting, and as Adhémar de Laffemas came from the Rue de Varennes they did not enter the Bois de Boulogne on the same side. Savinien was thus alone during the first part of his ride, not having met such acquaintances of his as might be in the Bois. Those whom he saw most frequently since his arrival in Paris were not in the habit of riding in the morning.

However, this momentary isolation did not prevent him from looking at the men and women who rode by. It entertained him to study their way of mounting and the odd habits contracted in Paris, including the practice which has originated, who knows how, of riding with your arms stuck out, if you are a man, and with your elbows drawn close to your sides, if you are a woman, and this even to the degree of making a hollow between the shoulders.

M. de Laffemas could have told the viscount the names of almost all the equestrians, but he almost always joined him before the crowd appeared, and with one accord they usually rode, to exercise their horses,

in the deserted avenues which extend towards the Château de Madrid. Riding was the marquis's passion, and the viscount had the same taste to a marked degree. Savinien would not have been sorry to serve his apprenticeship under the patronage of the brilliant Adhémar in the society which he elbowed in the Bois, but without mingling with it, and he hoped that some day or other his cousin would tell him all about the people who changed like kaleidoscopic views all along the Allée des Poteaux.

On the day in question it was beautifully clear, and any number of riders had gathered together. It had rained the night before, the leaves freshened by the shower still cast a few drops upon the emerald turf, and the sky, veiled by a slight mist, had a silvery tinge. It was one of those spring mornings which bring thoughts of green fields to the most city-hardened brains in Paris. And the last of the Amaulis was obliged to confess that the moors of Plouër lacked the charms of this wood laid out so skilfully for the pleasure of the rich.

He rode along more slowly than usual, giving Trevelyan, whom he had well in hand, full liberty to curvet as he pleased, so that the animal made the mud fly in all directions. He thus passed down the Allée des Poteaux in its entire length, after which he indulged in a trot to Madrid and then galloped along the Allée de Longchamp, which took him beyond the Pré Catelan. These exercises lasted an hour, after which Savinien thought of returning to the more frequented paths, and so letting Trevelyan remain at a walk, he suffered him to enjoy his well-earned rest.

At the Carrefour de la Croix he finally met his cousin Adhémar, coming quietly along, mounted upon a bay horse. The marquis had some resemblance to Don Quixote, but he was a sort of English-looking Don Quixote, with very long whiskers of a somewhat too decided ruddy hue. Still he had an air of distinction, and his face was not wanting in expression, although he did his best to imitate the English cast of countenance by hiding all emotions.

"Good morning, Savinien," said he, "I am late to-day. Would you believe it, my dear cousin, my mother sent for me at seven o'clock this morning to solemnly inform me that she had made up her mind to have me married and settled before autumn, and she added that I must go away this summer to visit the relations of my intended bride in the country? I got out of it by making a promise which I have not the smallest intention of keeping. But how did you get along with Trevelyan?"

"Splendidly, cousin," replied Savinien, smiling as he saw a sarcastic look come over the marquis's face; "he is like a lamb."

"You must be joking."

"Not at all. He made a little fuss at first, but that was soon over. You see, he obeys my hand and my knees."

"It is astonishing. I must compliment you. If he did not throw you at the first start it must be because you have the devil of a grip. I confess that I was rather anxious. But I see that you can ride fully as well as I can. Shall we go up the avenue and see who is out this morning? I will tell you no end of anecdotes about the riders. Besides, I must talk to you about your election at the club. Would you believe it, my dear boy, that within the last two days your chances have greatly diminished? Yes, my dear fellow," resumed M. de Laffemas, "there are persons at the club who are trying to prevent your being elected."

"I am surprised to hear it!" exclaimed Savinien. "I certainly did

not expect to be elected by acclamation, but I thought that I should derive a certain benefit from my very insignificance. I don't belong to any guild, for the excellent reason that I have but recently arrived in Paris. I ought not to have any enemies."

"People always have enemies."

"Didn't you say yourself that my being a new-comer gave me a better chance?"

"Yes, of course. Unfortunately, you have ceased to be unknown to some among us."

"How can that be? Excepting yourself, my dear Adhémar, I have not seen a single member of your club since I came here."

"Several have inquired about you. It is strange, is it not? What would you think if I told you that they already know where you visit? You cannot imagine how Paris is like a petty country town in its gossip. Society here is subdivided into a certain number of fractions which ignore one another. But in each one of these people talk against the remaining fractions just as they do at Saint-Malo or Dinard. Besides, Viscount d'Amaulis isn't a nobody. Several members know your name, and, on seeing it on the list of candidates for membership, they inquired what representative this was of one of the oldest families of western France."

"But what objection do they make to me?" asked Savinien, somewhat offended.

"Oh, nothing that affects the honour of your name! It was at first objected that you are not rich enough."

"I should understand that objection if it were a question of marriage."

"My dear fellow, the objection has its force in the present case. When you belong to the Jockey you are obliged to keep up a certain style, or at least to live in a certain way which necessitates considerable expenditure. Fortune is a guarantee against certain failures in this respect which occur only too often. It is needless to say that I had no trouble in proving that your means are of much more solid foundation than those of many members of the club with whom I am acquainted. Your fortune is in land, and when a man owns land he holds out for a long time."

"Especially when he only comes to Paris occasionally, and as I have less than ever any intention of living here for good, I think that I can guarantee that I shall not come to ruin."

"Between ourselves, this isn't certain. I remember country gentlemen whom I have seen arrive in Paris for the races in April, and who have left in June after the Grand Prix was over. They had, meanwhile, had time to reduce themselves to utter poverty. But let us leave that matter, and allow me to repeat what some ill-disposed persons say. At the head of them there is a booby named Pontaumur, whose special charm is his happy faculty for keeping out new members."

"I heard of him quite recently. He wished to be invited to a card-party at which I was present, but missed his aim."

"It is perhaps for that reason he has a grudge against you. It is certain that he set afloat the report that you frequent very objectionable society, money-brokers, and third-rate women of gay behaviour. And, between ourselves, there is some truth in what he says. For instance, that man who took you to Pinchard, what's his name? I always forget his name."

"George Fougeray."

"Well, he is not thought to be in a very clearly ascertained position. Nobody knows exactly what he lives on."

"He lives on what he makes, and he makes it honestly."

"I don't doubt it, but that is a somewhat vague profession, you know. You will tell me that many people in Paris are like him. That is true, but they have no friends in clubs of high standing."

"My dear cousin," replied Savinien, very firmly, "George Fougeray was at the same school with me, and ever since I have been here he has shown me the utmost cordiality. I was perhaps wrong in living his life for a few days, and I now see him much less often. But I have nothing serious to reproach him with, and if he were attacked in my presence, I should think it my duty to defend his character."

"You would do right, cousin. A man should always defend his friends. But I must tell you all that I heard. Are you not also the friend of a Monsieur Bouret?"

"The friend? No! He is Monsieur Montauron's partner. Montauron is my uncle's banker. I only know him from presenting my letter of credit to him. If I have met him since, elsewhere than at his office, it is not my fault, I beg you to believe. He goes everywhere."

"And especially to see Anita, that madcap of the Boulevard Malesherbes."

"He was there, it is true, on the night when I reluctantly went there myself."

"And were very neatly fleeced. You see how things come to be known! I could tell you who lost, as well as the name of the pretty fellow who robbed you all."

"He is a foreigner—a Swede."

"Count Aparanda, to be sure! He has a well-established reputation as a mere adventurer. It appears that he is an intimate friend of Anita's. I should not be much surprised if he plotted with her to entice you into her den, and pick your pocket."

"You think that he cheated, then, and that this woman is his accomplice?"

"It is quite possible."

"She has a superb place, however, and nothing there suggests a gambling-house."

"One cannot trust to appearances."

"This man Pontaumur, who has taken the trouble to inquire about me, was, however, himself very desirous of joining the card-party at her house."

"Pontaumur wouldn't care to go there except to win money, or lose it, if he fancied doing so. But the chief subject of reproach against you, cousin, is that you belong to some club or other, the name of which I forget."

"The Plungers' Club. What harm is there in belonging to that? Cannot one belong to more than one club, or to several?"

"Certainly. Even if you already belonged to the Jockey you could go round to all the Paris gambling-houses, and no fault would be found, as a passion for play is supposed to account for that. But when you aspire to a club like ours, you should not begin by belonging to a second-rate place like the Plungers'."

"I did not choose it, I assure you, and had no thought of belonging to it. Fougeray had me elected without saying a word to me till it was

done, and then I did not like to refuse. I have not gone there a dozen times, and shall probably never set foot in the place again. But, my dear cousin, as I should be very sorry if my admission give you the least trouble, I beg you to withdraw my name."

"Not at all! not at all! I shall keep it on the notice, and I answer for it that you will be admitted. Pontaumur and two or three other idiots of the same sort will put in some black balls, which will be crushed by a majority of white ones. It would be a pretty stir up if one of my nearest relations was blackballed! If such an affront as this were put upon me, I should send in my resignation. Be easy in your mind, my dear Savinien; you shall be elected, and on the day of the Grand Prix you shall be seated in our stand. Meantime, shall we review the frequenters of the Allée des Poteaux? We cannot trot now without an accident, and if you were less firm in your seat I should be uneasy, for Trevelyan is deucedly caperish. However, with you he cannot misbehave himself."

Talking as they rode, the cousins had now reached the point where the road to the Pre-Catelan cuts across the route patronised by equestrians. Carriages of all kinds, phaetons, waggonettes, and victorias were coming up in crowds, several driven by women who were all of good society.

There was but one actress or "irregular" to be seen, and this was Anita, who must needs smile upon the viscount in the most engaging manner. It was easy to see that she would have liked to stop and talk to him, but the cousins preferred to ride on.

She was on horseback, escorted by a bearded individual who was also mounted, and whom Savinien would have greatly preferred not to meet, but who bowed to him. This bow threw the viscount into a state of extreme perplexity. He would have liked to pass it by unacknowledged, but that would have been cutting a man who, personal reasons apart, might greatly harm Madame Montauron. Besides, there was no reason for returning a polite bow by marked rudeness. When a man has consented to sit down and play cards with another, he cannot well pretend not to recognise him, unless the man in question be a blackleg; and although Count Aparanda had not a good name exactly, he was not yet "disqualified," as is said in sporting parlance. All this flashed through Viscount d'Amaulis' mind as he ended by returning the bow. His cousin, who was observing him stealthily, saw him hesitate, and turned in his saddle to see whom Savinien had honoured by his recognition.

"Who is that *rastaquouère?*" he asked, scornfully.

Amaulis, who had not seen Gil Pérès play the Brazilian at the Palais Royal theatre, did not understand the word, but he guessed its meaning.

"It is the man of whom you were speaking just now," he answered with some embarrassment. "It is Count Aparanda."

"That man a Swede? Never in the world! He is a pirate of the Savannah, a sea wolf! He has just the face for a villain's part at the Ambigu."

"I agree with you, but it appears that he really belongs to a noble Swedish family."

"I have heard so, too, but now that I have seen him I cannot believe it. Between ourselves, cousin, I am greatly surprised that you should have risked your money in playing with a man with a face like that."

"I was wrong, but I have suffered for it."

"Yes, the lesson was a rough one, but why the deuce did you not cut him dead when he had the impudence to bow to you?"

"I lack presence of mind," replied Savinien, who did not wish to assign the true reason for his condescension as regards the disreputable foreigner. "In the country we are in the habit of bowing to every one who bows to us."

"You run no great risk in the country, as you know all about everybody. Here, on the contrary, we are obliged all the time to be on the defensive as regards intruders who want to force their way into society. Rudeness serves as armour. I advise you to take no further notice of this northern gentleman when he bows to you again. But tell me, hasn't he something to do with Monsieur Montauron?"

"No; not that I know of, at all events," stammered the viscount, greatly surprised.

"Nor with Madame Montauron?" insisted the marquis.

"No, nor with her."

"I ask you this, because I just now recollected that my mother, who has a remarkable memory, told me that a dozen years ago or so this so-called 'Count' Aparanda made a great figure in Paris, and paid a great deal of attention to Mademoiselle de Louvigné, who afterwards became Madame Montauron. It was even said, it seems, that he wanted to marry her."

"I—I do not know—I was not in Paris," answered Savinien, confusedly.

"And you were but a dozen years old, to be sure. I myself was too young to know what was being said in society then, but my mother was very well acquainted with an elderly lady named De Morvieux, who was a kind of distant relation of the young lady's, and she heard of a sort of adventure, the result of which was never exactly known. That reminds me now that your uncle Trémorin must know all about the matter, for Monsieur de Louvigné, the father, had been one of his friends. Ask him to tell you all about it when you see him."

"Why should I? I don't wish to mix myself up in the affairs of the Montauron household."

"Oh, only for curiosity's sake! What sort of a man is this Montauron?"

"Well, he is a very rich banker."

"It is said that he is really an honest man. But that is not what I mean. What kind of people go to his house? You went there, didn't you?"

"Yes, once. It seemed to me that there were a great many financiers. His wife, I believe, has still some friends in the society in which she formerly moved."

"Of course, I know some who will be very glad to take booths at the great charity fair which this princess of wealth is going to hold in her park. You will be there, I suppose?"

"I have not been invited yet."

"Oh, you need not have an invitation to go in and buy. It is only necessary to go in with your pockets full of money—and come out with them empty. If I hesitate in thus diverting myself it is because I have already smarted for it. For the past two years we have been absolutely assassinated with charity fairs. There cannot be the least little inundation or the smallest earthquake but what I must spend twenty-five louis at the very least. To be sure, it is very entertaining. You see duchesses selling barley sugar, and millionaires asking for alms, as it were, at the

door. If you like, we will go together to the fair which the Provincial Bank man means to give. It will be next week, I believe."

"With pleasure. The park is superb."

"Oh, I don't care for the park! But they say that it rains heiresses at this banker's house. I confess that I shouldn't be sorry to fish up some heiress or other."

"But, my dear cousin, you said just now that you would not be married on any account."

"Not a woman of my mother's choosing: that's not the same thing at all. She wants me to marry the daughter of a nobleman of Angers, as noble as a king and as solid as the Pont Neuf, who will leave fifty thousand francs yearly income to her. What in the world should I do with that? What should I live on while waiting on such hopes as those? What could I do till my father-in-law drew the last breath? Besides, my mother will not leave me more than that on her side. It is no use for me to marry a woman who has not a copper more than what I shall have myself."

"There are other reasons: the birth, the high standing of the family, and the personal qualifications of the young lady herself."

"That's all very well, my dear fellow, but it is not like money down. I am over head and ears in debt, fifteen hundred louis to that brigand of a Pinchard alone! I have no establishment to keep up, as I live at my mother's house, but she does not pay for my horses' keep, and they cost me the deuce of a lot, without counting other expenses which I cannot very well enumerate just now. Why, I want half a dozen millions along with the bride herself! If I find them I don't care how they may have been made."

"There's the Golden Pig again!" thought Viscount d'Amaulis.

"With ten millions I'll take a humpback," continued the marquis, laughing. "That surprises you, cousin, and I see that you don't approve of my conjugal 'profession of faith.' It is all very well when, like you, a man has made up his mind to live in a country chateau and is willing to take—nothing more easy!—some young lady belonging to our own circle, and with many good qualities and a fair dowry. In the country that is all that is necessary for happiness. Here, however, it is not the same thing at all. Under three hundred thousand francs' income means poverty, at all events to me. You will say that it is a pity to let one's-self down. I'll guarantee that in old times no one looked so closely into the matter. Marrying the daughter of a rich tax-collector was called 'manuring one's fields.' The conclusion is: if you know an heiress among the people who go to Montauron's and who wants a husband, tell me who she is."

"I know one who will bring five millions to her husband, and on her wedding day, too, for she is an orphan."

"Did her father fail?"

"I think not, but he made his fortune by risky and doubtful speculations."

"How the mischief could he have made it by honest ones? It is not by honest labour that people become millionaires. If the father has no blemish, the daughter must have one, of course."

"This girl has not. She is remarkably pretty and extremely intelligent."

"Oh! oh! oh! If she is so perfect as all that, she would suit you as well as me."

"I did not come to Paris to marry," said Savinien, evasively.

"What stuff! Just as though people ever made up their minds to

This incipient broker was of about the same age as the viscount, and looked only too ready to chat.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Savinien, politely raising his hat, "will you be kind enough to tell me the name of that gentleman who is talking away so fast—over there—in the midst of that group."

"With the red nose and English whiskers?"

"Yes."

"That is one of Bismarck's secretaries," replied the young man, with perfect gravity.

"What, sir?"

"He has been sent here by his employer who has bought stock at eighty-two ten, and wants to get rid of it."

Savinien saw that the smiling jester was making fun of him; he turned pale with anger, and was about to speak to him in quite another tone, when a young clerk came up in all haste and, catching the facetious individual by the waist, exclaimed: "What are you doing here? The governor is looking everywhere for you! There's a despatch! It has just been posted up! Come along, you lazy-bones! You have little time left. The prices are running up like mercury. They will be at eighty-three before the close!"

They both set off like pointers after a hare, and were already far off before Viscount d'Amaulis could think of any cutting thing to say in view of punishing the saucy fellow whom he had made the mistake of addressing. They were, indeed, so soon lost in the crowd that Savinien gave up the idea of following them.

"I must have a very countrified appearance to be treated with such impertinence by that scamp," said he, between his teeth. "I won't lose my time running after him, but if I come across him I will teach him manners. What a set, and how I pity George for being thrown into such society! I should never get used to it, and the best thing I can do is to take myself off. I should have been glad to find out the name of the lady's husband—but I give it up—the first attempt is enough. There he is still, he has even come near the steps, and seems to be watching me—this is the best time to be off, as I don't care about entering into any further explanation with him." With this wise resolution, Yvonne's cousin turned his back upon the swarm under the colonnade and descended the steps, thinking of all he had seen and heard.

He was still confused, and went away when the noise was at its height. There was a frightful clamour, and at each moment he was elbowed by people who looked as though they were besieging the place, so hurriedly did they rush up the steps. The words "Despatch!" "Poster!" "Rise!" buzzed in his ears, sometimes accompanied by energetic swearing.

There was evidently something strange going on. Some unforeseen news must have caused all this excitement. Seen from above, the flight of steps resembled an ant-hole into which a stick had been thrust to stir up the insects inside.

Savinien took no notice of the effect caused by the despatch which was noisily announced on all sides, but he thought of his friend who had thrown himself into the midst of the strife, and wondered how he would get out of it. George Fougeray had sufficient experience to navigate among the rocks on which so many speculators come to grief, but there are storms which overturn the best directed vessels, and the squall now brooding over 'Change was no doubt fraught with disaster.

Savinien thought that Fougeray was for "running down," and imagined he had caught alarming information on the wing. "The run is up!" had said the little clerk, before hastening off with the saucy young fellow whose absurd reply had so much annoyed him.

"Who knows whether this rise may not strip George of all he has made in five years?" said the viscount to himself. "I should be very sorry, for I like him very much, frivolous as he is. My uncle would judge him very harshly, but I think that he has remained good-hearted and honest in spite of the life he leads, and I should really be showing very little interest in him to abandon him just as he has plunged in up to the neck, as he says he has done. He asked me to wait for half an hour at the confectioner's at the corner. I may as well gratify him, and when I have heard what he has to tell, it will be time enough to call on my relatives in the aristocratic quarter of the city. But why did he choose this shop as a place of meeting? What an idea! I have just left table, and haven't the least wish to eat cake. Bah! I'll take a glass of port, and if George makes me wait too long, I will smoke a cigar outside the establishment, which, by the way, seems to have a good run of custom; there are four or five carriages in front of it now.

Savinien, who had now reached the bottom of the steps, turned round to take a last look at the building where his friend's fate was being decided, and again he saw in the doorway the raging husband, who seemed to be following him with his eyes.

Little did it matter, however, if this man were busying himself about him. Savinien shrugged his shoulders and went his way.

In the depths of his heart he was not only thinking of the danger to George. He had, besides, another anxiety which he did not exactly admit to himself, but which, nevertheless, preyed upon his mind. He remembered certain words which had fallen from his companion—certain changes in his manner when he was at his post under the colonnade, and he asked himself whether this young man, who seemed to be very reckless, had not followed up the idea which had come into his head at the restaurant; whether he had not allowed himself to associate his former schoolmate in his speculations, and that without due authorisation or even telling him of it.

"Why the deuce did he introduce me to that Monsieur Galipot, who looked like a jobber?" said Savinien to himself.

He crossed the street with considerable difficulty, for it was more crowded than ever, and on coming to the confectioner's shop pointed out by George he passed near two gentlemen who were leaving the establishment, and he heard one of them say to the other: "This shop is decidedly the Ladies' Exchange."

The gentlemen passed by, and Savinien, before going in, asked himself what they had meant by these words: though he knew that women were not admitted into the Bourse, and that the interdiction did not prevent them all from speculating in shares of all kinds "quoted" and "unquoted" in the official lists.

A woman of fashion can, without leaving her dressing-room, write to her broker to give him an order to sell or buy, using the same paper as serves her for her love-letters; and, indeed, this is done even by some women of the gay world. Some have speculated wisely, and can reason about "settlings" as clearly as old brokers.

There are also women living on little incomes, door keepers' wives,

"Do you really think that I ride well, sir?" asked the young girl, without attempting to hide the pleasure this compliment gave her.

"The stirrup is a trifle low. I have only that fault to find."

"The marquis knows what he is talking about," said the riding teacher, "there are not ten horsemen in all Paris equal to him."

"Without counting my cousin, Monsieur d'Amaulis," added Adhémar, gaily. "Just fancy, mademoiselle, my sending him only to-day the horse which he is now riding! It is harder to ride than you can possibly imagine, and he is on it now for the first time. You can realise what he has done in less than two hours to bring it under control; a lady might ride it now. I scarcely recognise my Trevelyan."

"That is skilful, indeed," remarked the ex-captain. "It several times threw the Englishman who sold it to the marquis, and yet he had a good seat."

"Trevelyan must gallop beautifully," said Mademoiselle Fourcas. "What a pity that we can only walk our horses here."

"There is nothing to prevent our finding a less frequented path," replied Savinien, eagerly.

"I should like to finish passing my review before leaving this ride. It is so entertaining to see all the different people which one finds here between ten and eleven. There comes a woman now whom I call 'the solitary one.' She looks so mournful that she makes me feel inclined to shed tears whenever I see her; indeed, it seems as though she herself were weeping over mysterious sorrows. I never saw her bow to any one. Don't you think that it would be amusing to find out the meaning of this living enigma? But look at that fat couple riding in view of reducing their flesh! The husband and wife together must weigh over five hundred pounds. They absolutely bow their poor horses down. Every time I see them I feel inclined to report them to some society for the prevention of cruelty to animals."

"A good idea! If some of the ridiculous objects one meets could be kept out of the Bois, my heart would be gladdened. But, as a whole, the appearance of the riders is very attractive. Don't you agree with me, mademoiselle? And don't you think that there are better riders in Paris than anywhere else?"

"I have never ridden anywhere but here, so that I cannot say. It seems to me, however, that in Brittany——"

"People learn to keep their seat, but holding on is not everything," said M. de Laffemas.

"Defend yourself, Monsieur d'Amaulis!" exclaimed the young girl, gaily. "The conqueror of Trevelyan has a right to be heard."

"Mademoiselle," replied Savinien, "I make no pretensions as a rider, except that I don't fear either hard-mouthed horses or bad roads. We hunt down there in woods where most Parisians would come to grief."

"Oh, following hounds! that is my dream of bliss!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Fourcas.

"A pleasure which you can easily have, mademoiselle," said the marquis, eagerly. "One of my friends, who lives twenty leagues from Paris, has one of the finest forests in France. When the season begins, his wife would, I am sure, be delighted to receive you at her château at Chadeuil."

As soon as the conversation had started, the two cousins, without saying anything to each other, had hastily turned their horses round, and

idden on side by side with Mademoiselle Fourcas, in order to converse with ier at ease. The Vicomnt d'Amaulis was on her left, the Marquis de Laffemas on her right, and beside him Captain Bricourt, who felt no lesire to act the censor. It was easy to see that with him Mademoiselle Fourcas found herself at liberty to do as she pleased.

"Yes, mademoiselle," resumed the gallant Adhémar, "it depends upon ou alone to attend a hunt this year like few that can now be had in our ountry—a truly royal hunt. The Duke d'Aumale hasn't a finer pack of ounds at Chantilly, nor better horses than my old friend Chadeuil."

"I daresay, sir," said Madame Montauron's favourite; "but this rincely amusement is not for me. Why should I be invited by Madame le Chadeuil, whom I have not the honour of knowing, and who probably s not aware of my existence?"

"You are mistaken, mademoiselle," replied the marquis, audaciously. 'The fame of your beauty and wit has spread everywhere, and every door vhich you might deign to knock at would be opened to you."

"Heaven knows that I would *deign* very willingly, but I cannot knock' all alone. Please remember that I am an orphan, and do not go nywhere excepting to see Madame Montauron."

"She ought to be able to introduce you into the best society, as she elongs to it by birth."

"But she does not go out. She lives a very retired life."

"Not so very retired, as she is soon going to give a great charity-fair n her park, to which she intends to invite all Paris."

"Oh, once is not always!"

"But you will be at the fair, will you not, mademoiselle?"

"Yes. It seems I am to play a part in the affair. I am to sell some- hing—matches, cigarettes, or flowers."

"My cousin and I will buy up all you have for sale, and if you will llow me on that occasion to profit by the opportunity to make you cquainted with the Countess de Chadeuil, I shall feel most happy indeed."

"I should be highly flattered; but if—which is not likely—she should lo me the honour to invite me to her chateau, I should be obliged to lecline, unless she invited my governess and my uncle also. Between ourselves, I would willingly go by myself, but it would not be thought roper. Proper! that is the great word—the watchword of slavery!"

"Why should not your uncle be invited?"

"I cannot very well fancy him hunting a stag," replied Mademoiselle 'ourcas, laughing. "He is an excellent man, but he never rode on horse- back in his life, and I shouldn't care for him to be killed."

"He could stay at the château while the hunt went on, and he would ind some one to talk to, for Chadeuil has very sedentary guests, and inanciers, too."

"I am afraid that they would hardly care to talk about the Bourse with him all day long. Nor do I think that I should find any great leasure in galloping pompously along well-kept roads. I should think hat I was at the court of Louis Quatorze. Your fashionable amuse ments re too solemn for me, as my tastes are those of a barbarian. Men in red oats and women in court riding-habits would terrify me. I should be hinking of the wild Brittany forests which Monsieur d'Amaulis was elling us about just now—those in which Parisians would be so apt to break their necks."

The marquis bit his lip and Savinien raised his head. He had been

so far a silent listener to the conversation, in which he thought that his cousin took too conspicuous a part. He felt that very natural annoyance arising from rivalry which may exist without there being any love in the matter. It was not jealousy, but simply displeasure. A man is always inclined to think more of a woman whom some one else admires, although he may not until then have given her a thought.

Now, Savinien had thought more than once of Mademoiselle Fourcas since their first meeting, and was delighted to have met her, but he was still hesitating as to how far he would allow himself to become interested in her, when the Marquis de Laffemas began to goad him on, as it were, by paying her the most undisguised attentions. Adhémar had no hesitation in throwing himself eagerly into a fray the prize of which would be five millions, and began by using heroic measures. He proposed to introduce M. Fourcas into the most aristocratic and exclusive society. In this he was very daring, as the Countess de Chadeuil was not to be trifled with as to her guests. He counted, in point of fact, upon the friendship of her husband, who would understand the situation, and help him on to win the heiress. Between men of the world such services are exchanged. However, Adhémar already saw that he had an intelligent girl before him, and realised that Mademoiselle Fourcas did not easily swallow any bait set for her vanity. This parvenu's daughter had plenty of common sense and a strong will. She knew how to defend herself, and in order to get rid of the premature overtures of the marquis, she now appealed to Savinien d'Amaulis, who did not require urging to come forward.

"My fellow Bretons would be much flattered, mademoiselle, if they knew your preference for our poor province. But if you saw it your illusions would soon vanish."

"Do you say that so as to avoid asking me to hunt in your woods?" said the young girl, with a somewhat sarcastic smile. "You must know that my uncle would not go out of his way to hunt at Plouër any more than he would to visit the Château de Chadeuil. You saw him the other evening at Madame Montauron's reception. You must know what to think of him. He does not like music, books, the fine arts, nature, or active exercise."

"He likes business only," remarked M. de Laffemas, "and I do not blame him. In these degenerate days business is everything."

"Then I do not belong to the times, for I hate business. But don't think that I mean to complain of my good uncle or that I take him as a tyrant. He leaves me perfectly free and does not undertake to change my tastes. Ask Monsieur Bricourt."

"I can certify," replied the riding-master, greatly flattered at being called upon as a witness, "Monsieur Fourcas, who detests horses, allows Mademoiselle Julia to keep four, and those we are riding to-day are not the best of them."

"Yes, gentlemen, I keep horses," said the heiress, laughing. "My uncle never goes into my stables, but he lets me visit them oftener than is quite proper for a young person. He knows that I like to do so, and that is enough for him."

"Mademoiselle," said the marquis, in a jocular tone, "you cannot marry anybody but a member of the Jockey Club."

"I shall take good care not to do so. He would try to inculcate his own precepts as to horseflesh and horsemanship, and I have my own ideas and hold on to them."

"You would soon convert him," urged M. de Laffemas, nettled by the retort.

"No, I should not try. Besides, as I am making confessions, I may as well say that I don't care to have a master. I am too fond of living as I do since the best of uncles took me home from the convent where I spent five years, which were not the most agreeable of my existence by any means. I have my own residence, so to speak, in the house in which we live in the Avenue du Trocadéro; the entire left wing is given up to me, and I do as I please there. It is true that I don't abuse my freedom, for I have no one with me but my staid governess, Miss Georgina Pearson, but if I chose to give any balls there my uncle would not, I believe, prevent me. But see what a strange-looking man is coming towards us?" exclaimed Mademoiselle Fourcas, suddenly, pointing to a rider who was rapidly approaching them, accompanied by a woman as fair as he was dark.

Savinien frowned. He had recognised Count Aparanda and the giddy woman who answered to the soft name of Anita, and at this moment the meeting was doubly annoying. The idea of receiving, in presence of Mademoiselle Fourcas, another salutation from the Swede, and another smile from the damsel, vexed Viscount d'Amaulis beyond measure. Unfortunately, there was no possibility of avoiding this unpleasant meeting. The road was narrow, and unless they turned back it would be necessary to pass the objectionable pair.

"It must be Blue-Beard," said the young girl to Savinien.

"With his eighth wife," added the marquis.

Savinien, who had no disposition to smile, put on an air of haughty indifference, and so managed his horse as to place himself at the critical moment between Anita and Mademoiselle Fourcas, whom he wished to preserve from all contact with the actress.

He turned Trevelyan to the right, and the three other horses which were in a line with his had to turn as he did. This prudent manœuvre had the effect of leaving a free passage for the advancing couple, and all that Count Aparanda had to do, to continue straight on, was not to notice the riders whose path he had to cross. Everything should have induced him to do so. It is not customary to bow more than once to the same person during the same ride, nor is it customary when a man goes so far as to show himself in public with an actress of questionable notoriety, for him to bow to such persons as he may happen to be acquainted with. Men do not recognise each other in Paris under such circumstances.

Count Aparanda had, however, special motives for departing from these rules. Anita, no doubt obeying his directions, rode forward at this decisive moment, and so turned her horse as to brush against Viscount d'Amaulis.

"When shall you come to take your revenge at cards?" said she, speaking very loudly. "We expect you every evening, my dear sir. Make haste and come!" And with this she smiled at the viscount in the most familiar manner.

Savinien, scarlet with anger, felt at the moment as though he could have strangled her. He took care not to look at Mademoiselle Fourcas, but without turning his head towards her, he thought he could discern a scornful and sarcastic expression on her charming face. He fancied, also, that his cousin Adhémar sneered, and he asked himself what he should do to destroy the effect of Anita's stupid impertinence.

The Swede, who was riding directly behind the damsel, bowed to him gravely, and was so near to him that the salutation was an absolute attack. It was necessary to return this bow, meant as a provocation, or to cut the man dead on the spot.

Savinien, exasperated by this misplaced insistance, preferred to cut him. He put on a face such as might have frozen the Seine in midsummer, and in his anger spurred Treveylan, who was not an animal of meek disposition. The horse, suddenly goaded, bounded forward, bringing its rider to the left, and the viscount fearing to run against Mademoiselle Fourcas, brushed against Count Aparanda's horse in endeavouring to avoid that of the heiress. It was the affair of a moment, and the squadron around the young lady was then free to go on.

"What, sir!" she exclaimed, laughing, "do you know Blue-Beard and his eighth spouse? She might pass, for she is pretty and looks lively, and must be a very entertaining hostess, but the gentleman who follows her like her shadow is very repulsive, and I am surprised that he should be one of your friends."

"He! I met him at a club, where I shall never set foot again; heaven forbid that I should cultivate his acquaintance!"

He had scarcely spoken, when a hand was laid upon his arm, and a voice, of which he well knew the sound, spoke these brief and significant words: "Two words with you, if you please."

The viscount immediately stopped his horse, and found himself face to face with Count Aparanda, who had ridden back to take him to task

"What do you want?" he demanded, drily.

"I wish to know why you did not return my bow."

"Because it did not suit me to do so. I ought to ask you why you presume to bow to me when you are with a woman so bold as that?"

"A woman who received you at her house, and is quite as good as some who go about in society."

"Sir!"

"No big words, if you please! You have grossly insulted me, and you ran against my horse. You shall give me satisfaction for your insolence!"

"Whenever you please. I shall expect your seconds," replied Savinien d'Amaulis, urging on Trevelyan, who with one bound caught up with Mademoiselle Fourcas's chestnut. Count Aparanda turned his own horse, and rejoined Anita, who had not lost a word, and felt wild with joy. No one had ever yet fought on her account. A duel would make her yet more fashionable—especially one between titled men—and she certainly would not speak a word to prevent its taking place, even had she been sure that her escort would be shot in the encounter.

The feelings of Mademoiselle Fourcas were very different from these; they were to be detected in her anxious eyes. "What did that gentleman say to you?" asked she, in a husky tone.

"Nothing that would interest you, mademoiselle," replied Savinien d'Amaulis, endeavouring to speak with unconcern. "He wished to obtain certain information, and he thought it allowable to accost me here. Some foreigners are very ill bred."

The young girl said no more, but Savinien clearly saw that she was not deceived by his reply. From that moment she remained silent, and all the agreeable talk of M. de Laffemas failed to induce her to speak a word.

The marquis was soon reduced to chatting to the riding-master, who ould talk of nothing but his business; and as Savinien was taciturn, the ide became very far from sociable. Mademoiselle Fourcas cut it short hen she reached Pré-Catelan.

"We must part, gentlemen," said she, affecting a gaiety which she as far from feeling. "My uncle expects me at breakfast. I have only ast time to go home and dress."

"We are going to return home also," said M. de Laffemas, eagerly. "You will not, I hope, refuse us the pleasure of escorting you to your oor?"

"No, no! My uncle would not like to see me with so many gentlemen, and people in the Avenue du Trocadéro would make remarks about e. Monsieur Bricourt will suffice as an escort, and we shall go by the 'orte de la Muette. That is the shortest route."

"May I hope, mademoiselle, that you will allow our worthy Bricourt o show me your horses?"

"Oh, with pleasure! If you or Monsieur d'Amaulis would like to ide them, I shall be delighted. Good morning, gentlemen," added Mademoiselle Fourcas, who then abruptly turned to the left and set out long the road to the lake. The riding-master and the groom followed, nd the cousins remained alone.

"That young lady is far from being common-place, and the man whom he may prefer will be a fortunate fellow," said the Marquis de Laffemas. I wish that it were I; but I think, my dear Savinien, that you are the an."

"I hope not, as I have no thoughts of her," replied Savinien.

"Are you sincere in what you say, cousin?"

"Entirely so."

"Then you would not object to my paying attention to Mademoiselle ourcas?"

"Not in the least."

"I consider that settled, then, and shall act accordingly. Shall we go ack to the Rue de Varennes?"

"If you like; but I must ask you to excuse me from taking breakfast ith you. I have business at home."

"Very well. You are free, my dear friend. But tell me what you id to the bearded individual."

"He asked me why I did not bow to him. I replied that I did not ow to people whom I did not fancy."

"You were quite right: what then? He challenged you, I presume?"

"Yes, and I am expecting his seconds."

"The mischief! That is a pity. There is no honour in fighting with at man."

"I could not avoid all this, however. I rely on you to stand by me."

"On the duelling-ground? That is a most unpleasant task, dear ousin."

"You refuse?"

"No, not exactly. I am too fond of you to leave you in the lurch, but warn you that we shall have a great deal of trouble in finding seconds mong my friends at the club, and that I shall not consent to go out with ny man who does not move in my own circle. I should prefer that the natter should be arranged. It is quite likely that this adventurer may hange his mind. Wait for his seconds, and if they appear send them to

me. I will find out what it all amounts to, and act for you as I would for myself. At present, however, let us go home. We have passed all the carriages and can ride faster."

Savinien did not need any urging, and so giving Trevelyan the rein he set off with his cousin at a rapid trot towards home.

IV.

The great day had come; the superb mansion in the Avenue Ruysdaël had thrown its doors open to all such generous people as might be disposed to contribute to the charitable foundation initiated and patronised by Madame Montauron.

It was a question of erecting an asylum where destitute young girls would find a shelter and be protected from vicious associations, as well as learn a calling. It was also proposed to give the more deserving of them a dowry when they had reached a marriageable age. A noble and difficult enterprise, indeed, unless backed up by a very large amount of capital.

The director of the Provincial Bank had, on his side, already supplied a large sum, and it was hoped that the public would do the rest. It is well-known that society promptly responds to such appeals. To obtain all, and even more than is needed in such a case, it is only necessary to prepare some attractive entertainment, such as one of these fairs, at which feminine beauty can be gratified, while fashionable men can while away their time and spend a heap of money in an agreeable manner.

Madame Montauron had every facility for organising a productive sale, for she had both influence and wealth at her disposal. The attractiveness of the ladies charged with the stalls was an all important matter. Booths in which only quiet citizens' wives or daughters sat would not answer the purpose. Birth, and, above all, beauty was necessary in the saleswomen. However, the banker's wife had only to enlarge the circle of her usual acquaintance a little to find as many saleswomen as she needed. As her house was one which it was desirable to visit, the stalls were in great demand, so great, indeed, that it seemed as though some ladies would actually make bids for them.

The site selected for the fair was a delightful one. The park was as handsome as the Terrasse des Feuillants in the Tuileries Garden, and as well adapted for the reception of a crowd of fashionable people. The conservatory, the paths, the lawns, the leafy dome formed by the trees, all furnished varied and picturesque effects of light and shade. The newspapers spoke of the surprises which would await the people who responded to the charitable appeal made to the public by the medium of the press; for M. Montauron called upon the whole public, and his grounds were to be thrown open to all comers.

This resolution had certainly not been arrived at without hesitation or discussion. The original plan had been to limit the admissions to persons known either to the banker or to his wife. Indeed, Madame Montauron was greatly in favour of this course, and she suggested issuing invitations to the people whose patronage they desired.

Her husband, however, held a different opinion on the matter. He very reasonably maintained that in the interest of those whom the fair was intended to benefit, the park ought to be thrown open to all comers. It seemed to him that the system of offering State loans to public sub-

scription was worthy of imitation. The public at large would spend more money than a few chosen individuals, however wealthy the latter might be; and in regard to the result which it was sought to attain, it was not worth while haggling over the means. Why should the charity proffered by people without any social standing be refused, simply because they did not belong to the world of fashion, or because they might wish to try and appear to belong to that circle by taking part in the charitable schemes of others more socially favoured? What was to be feared?

Certainly these pleasures are costly, and people of low breeding would no doubt think they were paying expensively for an opportunity of displaying their bad manners, were they called upon to disburse three or four twenty franc pieces! Such people are ill at ease in a circle to which they are unaccustomed and often behave badly; still, if they fail to conduct themselves with propriety, it is easy to expel them, as the majority is never in their favour.

As regards women, it was decided that none should be admitted unaccompanied by gentlemen. It was thought that this would prevent the presence of any undesirable characters, as a man of good standing would think twice before making his appearance with an objectionable person leaning upon his arm.

Thus it was, that at about four o'clock one afternoon early in June, a crowd of elegantly-dressed men and women gathered together in the park of the great banker, Montauron. The weather was favourable, for although a few clouds tempered the heat of the sun there were no signs of approaching rain.

Dresses of all kinds were to be seen at this open-air gathering, for sales of this kind allow women an opportunity of appearing in costumes which are too conspicuous to be displayed elsewhere by daylight. The scene was thus almost like a masked ball, and the innovation was a happy one, for nothing could be more charming than these revivals of the most tasteful bygone fashions. Here on one side you saw a Polignac habit in mauve-tinted watered silk, here a Leezinska mantle in red Utrecht velvet embroidered with gold, here a robe of white lace, and a habit of violet satin, ruffles of English point, and large duchess hats, reminding one of the royal promenades at Versailles and Trianon. There were lilac dresses shot with pink, reminding one of those depicted in the paintings of Madame Vigée Lebrun; and here on another side one of lilac tinted with rose and richly embroidered, reminded one of the days of the Consulate. The lady who wore it recalled the portraits of the Empress Josephine at Malmaison. Then came costumes suited to whatever the wearer sold. There were cigar-dealers in Havana-coloured dresses, milkmaids in short skirts with many stripes, offering milk in cups of Sèvres china; cake-sellers, with straw hats caught up with bows on one side, and decked with roses of a deep red; sellers of Chinese goods with little hats, imitating those of the Celestials, and flowery robes of white silk lined with red satin; bouquet-vendors simply attired in white muslin; while ladies with bags for collecting alms were dressed in black with trimmings of glistening jet.

Beside the path along which M. Montauron had strolled with Savinien most of the sights were gathered. There was a long gallery, with stalls along its entire length, stalls draped with velvet and gold fringe, the effect of which was very artistic. On the right, on the lawn, was a dairy; a pretty tent, near which, to give some "local colour," two beautiful dappled cows from Brittany were penned. At the entrance of the conservatory, amid

the plants and flowers, there was a large bazaar, hung with pale yellow silk embroidered with figures of strange-looking animals, and provided with seats and props of bamboo in its natural state. And beneath the shade of the old trees, in the depths of shady groves, gilded kiosks filled with Japanese oddities shone out like luminous points; while here and there were tents for playing Dutch top, and revolving merry-go-rounds. Venetian lanterns of many colours hung in garlands across the walks, ready for illumination at night, for the fair was to be prolonged through the evening. Some of the amusements, indeed, would not begin until sunset, and some of the visitors had certainly waited for this, the second portion of the programme, so that an increase of the crowd might be looked for at that time.

Savinien had at first intended waiting until nine o'clock in the evening to make his appearance, as his heart was far from light, and if he presented himself at all it was rather in view of fulfilling a duty than in the hope of being amused. But he remembered that he would have more difficulty in finding Madame Montauron at night-time, and that it would be better to look for her while it was day-light in order that she might tell him whether she could find an opportunity of speaking to him.

For some days past the viscount had lived in a state of suspense which was fast becoming exasperation. An encounter with Count Aparanda had appeared to him inevitable, and he had for some days awaited that individual's seconds, reflecting in the meanwhile that his own possible death would leave Madame Montauron without a protector against the Swede. On the other hand, if the Swede fell in the encounter, he would carry into the other world the secret of her daughter's whereabouts.

However, on the morning of the fourth day after the challenge given in the Bois—Savinien had in the meantime thought it necessary to remain at home waiting for the arrival of the cardsharper's seconds—the following note reached him:

"Sir,—As long as you represent the interests of a certain person, who shall be nameless, we cannot fight. It is above everything essential that my position as regards that lady should be defined, and in order that this should be accomplished, I have already appointed a limit of time, which will not expire till the fifteenth of June. Until then I must not fight. When you insulted me, I could not control my first impulse of anger, and I told you to expect my seconds on the morrow. I have reflected, however, and shall not send any one to you. But, for all that, I intend when the right time comes, to exact from you the satisfaction which you owe me. I do not mean to leave France without having given you the lesson you deserve."

This singular epistle freed Viscount d'Amaulis for the moment from his anxiety as regarded Madame Montauron, but he did not reply to it, and kept it to himself. He could not show it to his cousin Adhémar, who would not have understood its true meaning, and who would have in all probability asked the name of the lady to whom it alluded. So Savinien limited himself to informing the marquis that Aparanda's seconds had not made their appearance, and that he thought there would be nothing more heard of the duel.

Nor did he say anything to Brigitte as regarded the challenge. Why frighten the nurse and mistress who already passed their lives in perpetual anguish and suspense? The nurse, whom he questioned, had nothing further to tell him, as the detective who watched Count Aparanda had

discovered nothing. For the time, too, apparent peace reigned in the abode of M. Montauron. Certain symptoms, however, led the banker's wife to fear that this tranquillity would be but transient, and through Brigitte, she entreated Savinien not to abandon his task, and especially, not to fail to appear at the charity fair, where she might be able to speak freely with him.

There had been no news of Mademoiselle Julia Fourcas since the ride in the Allée des Poteaux. Savinien having waited for Aparanda's seconds was unable to resume his rides till the count's letter reached him; and when he then returned to the Bois de Boulogne, he saw nothing of the heiress. However he met Adhémar de Lafleurnas, who did not allude to her, and this silence seemed strange to the viscount, who at once suspected his cousin of secret endeavours to make the conquest of the young girl, or rather of her millions.

As an additional annoyance, letters had ceased to come from Plouër. No more lengthy missives from uncle Trémorin: no more postscripts, consequently, from cousin Yvonne. Three days sometimes elapsed without any news from any source whatever, and courage failed the viscount to write under the pressure of existing circumstances. Thus it was that he found himself entering the Avenue Ruysdael charity fair in no smiling mood.

It was at its height, and presented an absolutely dazzling aspect. Savinien's first meeting was with a dealer in programmes, a lady dressed in lilac satin, with flounces of Spanish lace, which superb dame deigned to accept one louis—her flounces must have cost one hundred—in exchange for a little bit of card-board on which a few gilt letters were printed.

Further on, an "almoner," in a dress of maroon satin, extended a red velvet purse to him with such grace that he could not do less than drop forty francs in it "for the poor." He had no sooner received in exchange a charming smile and a "Thank you, sir!" than he saw a group of young girls who immediately surrounded him, proposing to sell him lottery tickets. These charming creatures were fair and rosy; they wore Directoire costumes and "Clarissa Harlowe" hats, and seemed as though they had never done anything in their lives but gather in a garland, as it were, round about the first comer to entreat him to remember the poor. The most active of them slipped a ticket into the viscount's hand, saying: "It is a hundred francs, sir."

Savinien overwhelmed, so to speak, gave a bank-note and went his way, asking himself what would become of him when his purse was emptied, which would not take long at the rate at which he was already draining it. Suddenly, however, kind fate sent him George Fougeray, who approached from a walk near by.

"Here you are at last!" exclaimed the young speculator, whom Amaulis had seen but little of late. "I knew very well that I should find you here, and I came for that very purpose. Ah! you may flatter yourself that you're a pretty tricky fellow! Ever since we were deprived of our coin at Anita's you have not been either to the club or to see me. Is it because you want to get into the Jockey that you scorn your former friends? Before you turn your backs upon them, wait till that illustrious club receives you into its arms."

"That is not the reason," muttered Savinien, reddening slightly. "I have been engaged with my relatives in the Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"Oh, I don't ask you to account for yourself to me. You are quite free

to pass your mornings galloping about the Allée des Poteaux, and your evenings who knows where?"

"Who told you that I was in the habit of riding? It is true, however, that I am. I always rode in Brittany, and now my cousin Laffemas has placed his horses at my disposal."

"I thought so. Anita told me she met you riding a half-breed that was worth, at least, three hundred louis. Such horses as that cannot be had for hire. But may I ask you what is the matter between you and Aparanda?"

"Nothing. Thank Heaven, I never see him!"

"It seems that you had some words with him in the Bois de Boulogne the other day—pretty sharp words, too."

"There was something of the sort about a bow which I did not return. But nothing came of it, I am almost sorry to say, for I don't like the man at all."

"Neither do I. I have never forgiven him for robbing me of my last penny. I am only glad that I did not try to recoup myself with another game, for he still continues to play, and is lucky with scandalous persistency. He is now ruining Glébof."

"Then he has no idea of leaving Paris?"

"In full tide of luck?—no fear! He won't leave till he cannot find any one left to play with him."

"That may be the case at no very late day."

"Let him go! Nobody will try to keep him."

"Flowers, gentlemen!" now said a charming woman in white faille.

"Embroidered fans, gentlemen!" said a deliciously pretty creature, with a big white straw hat with a gauze veil as trimming.

"Very sorry, ladies," said George, showing a dozen lottery-tickets, a programme, and two flutes. "I have so much in my hands now that I can't possibly buy any more."

"But you, sir—you have not bought anything," exclaimed both ladies at once, turning to Savinien, who was obliged to buy both a fan and a bouquet which cost him two louis, George, meantime, laughing in his sleeve.

"How much up to the present time?" asked he as he dragged Savinien away.

"Ten louis, and they persist in saying that I have not bought anything! I already have a programme and a hundred lottery-tickets."

"Where are they?"

"In my pocket."

"You great goose! If you had done as I do you would have got off this time. I exhibit my purchases, and people let me alone. I expect to get through the business for five louis. That isn't dear for the pleasure of seeing the fair in your company, for I warn you that I shan't leave you unless I am in your way?"

Savinien made a gesture of denial which was not sincere, but with which George was satisfied.

"Well, that is too much!" suddenly exclaimed the young speculator. "There's Pinchard! Does he expect to lend money to the managers of the fair?"

"Pinchard!" exclaimed Savinien; "Pinchard, the twenty-five-per-cent man! How is it that people receive such fellows as that?"

"My dear boy," said George, placidly, "everybody is received here

for the excellent reason that everybody pays to get in. 'Come in who pleases' is the rule at charity sales. Besides, Pinchard's presence is not to be sneered at. That money-lender there has a deal of hard cash, and as he is very sharp he won't hesitate about spending a large sum to advertise himself. Besides, he knows all Paris, and will easily find some one to countenance him."

"It is because all Paris knows him that he ought not to mix with the people he robs," said Savinien, indignantly.

"You don't understand anything about it," retorted George. "This garden is full of people who will be delighted to see him. They will positively take advantage of it to try to borrow money from him."

"Suppose we take advantage of it to talk about our loan?"

"What in the world do you want to say to him about it? It will be time enough to talk about it when the cash falls due."

"It is that date that annoys me when I think of it."

"Have you forgotten that we have three months before us, and that I am sure of being ready by the fifteenth of September?"

"No, but I am always afraid of some unforeseen impediment, and if that man would only repeat the assurance which he gave us to renew the note it would afford me extreme satisfaction."

"I shall take good care not to ask him. It would amount to the same thing as telling him that he would inconvenience us to the last degree by exacting his money on the fifteenth of June. My principle is to let a sleeping lion alone, or a sleeping creditor, which is just the same thing. Let him speak to us, my dear friend; he will speak soon enough."

"This time I believe you are right, for he has spied us out, and is coming our way."

"This would be the time, then, to go to the stalls, even if it cost us ten louis more, each of us?"

"No! no! We should look as though we were running away from him. Besides, it is too late. Here he is now."

The interesting Pinchard was indeed advancing, his hat on one side, a rose in his button-hole, and some parcels under his arm. He smiled affably upon the two friends and made ready to accost them. George Fougeray would have been glad to have avoided him, but he put a good face upon the matter and exclaimed: "You too! you coming to a charity fair! The world must be upside down, upon my word of honour!"

"You are still as polite as ever, I see," replied the money-lender in an almost surly tone. "Why should I be forbidden to bring my mite to the orphans?"

"You have a perfect right to do so, Pinchard. Charity is within the reach of every French citizen, like universal suffrage. You can do a charitable act on a grand scale. You have only to give all your clients all their notes back."

"The deuce! that would cost me too much, and my debtors are not poor."

"They will be if they keep on borrowing from you," sneered George.

"I don't ask them to do so," replied Pinchard in a dry tone, "especially just now as I need all the money which I have lent."

"What do you say?"

"The truth. I have just been robbed of a hundred thousand francs by a Spaniard who has gone off without paying me."

"That serves you right for lending money to a Spaniard."

"My dear sir, I lend to whoever borrows. This man has large plantations in Havana, and will pay me some day or other. But just now I am pinched."

"You look so! Come now, you would lend me two thousand louis more if I asked you."

"Not two thousand francs."

"Not even on my friend Amaulis' signature?"

"It is good, no doubt; but as I could not cash it at the Bank of France I could not do anything with it just now. After the fifteenth it will be another matter."

"What do you mean by 'after the fifteenth?'"

"I have a good deal of money to receive that day, and when my cash-box is full I shan't refuse to lend on whatever offers."

"Glad to hear it; but, my dear friend, you don't count upon us to increase your funds at that date?"

"I beg your pardon, I most certainly do. Forty-three thousand francs is a sum which I cannot suffer to lie idle."

"You forget that you promised to renew the bill for three months."

"I know that, but no one is expected to do what is impossible."

"Come now, Pinchard, be reasonable. Just remember that you gave us your word of honour to renew our note till the fifteenth of September, that we treated only on that condition, and that the interest was set at a high figure on that account."

"I did not foresee what has occurred. I am now reduced to turning everything into money at once. I am sorry to put you to trouble, but necessity has no law. Besides, the need I experience is only for the time being, and when I have made all my payments I shall be more than ever at your orders, and especially at those of Viscount d'Amaulis."

Savinien replied not a word to this remark. He was in consternation.

"Very well," rejoined George, angrily. "It suits you to act in a wrong manner towards me personally. You shall repent of it, I take my oath."

"'You personally,' not at all. I am obliged to act in the same manner towards all who are indebted to me. Even my being here is because I expected to see them almost all. Instead of writing to them I have told them by word of mouth that they must pay down upon the fifteenth of the month, and I must say that they have taken it very quietly, all those I have seen as yet, at any rate."

"Well, then, they are more amiable than I am, for I declare that I will pay you for this trick! I know almost all the fools who enable you to carry on your paltry trade, and I will tell them that you act in bad faith and that your word is not to be relied upon."

"I hope to have the opportunity of proving the contrary," replied the usurer, without apparent anger, "and I am not uneasy as to what you owe me."

"Oh, you shall be paid! But it will cost you dearer than you think!"

"We shall see. Allow me to add that in three months or even a month you won't be sorry, perhaps, to find me."

With this sarcastic farewell Pinchard turned away and disappeared in the crowd which thronged about the entrance of the garden. His rounds had doubtless been made, and he had no more debtors to warn. The short chat had taken place at a distance from the ladies who were accosting the new arrivals, and the two friends remained face to face, equally disconcerted.

"What do you think of that good-for-nothing scoundrel?" asked George.

"Nothing. I expected something of the sort," replied Savinien, sadly. "But what are we to do?"

"Pay him, the devil take him! If we don't he will sue us unmercifully."

"You will be obliged to sell your Ottoman stock, then?"

"Yes, if I can't do otherwise, for this affair would ruin me. My Ottoman stock is my last shot."

"What! have you come to that?"

"For three weeks past or so ill-luck has dogged my footsteps on 'Change as well as at cards. My settling-up was something dreadful."

"How is that when you have such reliable information to work upon?"

"I have none at present. Rheinthal has gone to Tunis to act in his patron's interests. Besides, everything has turned against me. It makes me believe that that Swede has the evil eye. To finish me off I need only fail to pay Pinchard."

"I beg you to believe that if I could help you——"

"But you cannot," interrupted George. "Tell me, Savinien, do you really think that if you wrote to your uncle he would leave you in the hands of this money-lender?"

"I don't know what he would do; but I haven't the courage to write to him about the matter."

"But if I find I cannot pay, Pinchard will come to you, and you would be obliged to pay in my place. I hope that no such thing will happen. I would rather sell my last pair of shoes. But suppose I should die before the note falls due, what then?"

"In such a case I would rather mortgage or sell my land than confess my folly to my uncle."

"It would come to the same thing, for I defy you to conceal from him what you might do in that way. The whole district round about the château would know of it."

"That is true. I should be pointed at as a madman who is spending his fortune, and you little think what I should lose by that."

"I know what you would lose, for in the country people can't marry if they sell or mortgage their land. That is why, in case of trouble, it would be better to apply to Monsieur de Tréniorin; but I will take my measures to avert the calamity. I have not a moment to lose, for the fifteenth is near at hand, and as I have no heart for the amusements of this fair, I am going to return home. I have spent five louis, but I do not regret them, for if I had not come here I should have had no inkling of Pinchard's evil intentions—the rascal! Good day: I will see you soon. I must see you to tell you where we stand."

"Try to arrange matters," said Savinien, without attempting to detain the imprudent friend who had placed him in this distressing position.

George's promises did not inspire him with much hope. He had stated, and with perfect truth, that his last ventures on 'Change had been bad, and the attempt which he had made to induce the viscount to apply to his uncle proved that he was by no means sure of being able to take up the note.

Savinien now began to realise the full extent of the disastrous consequences of an act so foolish in itself that it would scarcely have been pardonable in a schoolboy. To lend money to a friend who is embarrassed

is quite right and proper, but to give that friend the use of your name is an act of folly. Savinien knew this, and yet he had allowed himself to be led into committing himself in this manner. He could now do nothing but pay, and he was conscious that it would cost him his peace and his happiness, the friendship of M. de Trémorin and the affection of Yvonne. He already foresaw the fatal end. He walked on, lost in sad thoughts, threading the merry crowd from which he would gladly have fled, for had he been able to do as he pleased he would have gone off like George Fougeray.

"The sooner that I see Madame Montauron the better," said he to himself. "If she makes me a sign to say that she does not need me to-day, I shall be free to go off."

And, in order to find out what he wished to know, he dashed into the midst of the throng, foreseeing that he would be obliged to search all the stalls to find the lady he wanted.

Proceeding through the park, so full of fresh surprises at every turn, he espied a long line of gilded stalls extending past the conservatory. From a spot where he momentarily paused he could take in the whole line at a single glance, and he saw no familiar face. The saleswomen were charming, and their toilets were wonderfully beautiful. Models for all the portrait painters of Paris were to be seen, with many a picturesque bit likely to tempt the draughtsmen of the illustrated newspapers; indeed, besides several reporters taking notes, there were artists making rough sketches. However, Viscount d'Amaulis had not come to admire pretty faces, or to examine the different styles of Gainsborough, Reynolds, and Amy Robsart hats, or to compare toilets newly devised by great dressmakers—masculine ones—in faille or satin, Chinese crape of dazzling colour, or marvellous surah silk. He would most willingly have given all the splendour to have caught sight of his cousin Yvonne in a linen dress, with a straw hat on her head, at the end of the park.

But this was only one view of the fair. The bulk of the sales proceeded under the far-spreading trees whence there came a clashing of cymbals and a rolling of big drums, as on the Place du Trône when the great gingerbread fair is taking place. Savinien thought that the most stylish of the saleswomen would probably be found in the most crowded groves.

He entered one of these and came, at first, in full view of a huge vehicle for the display of gymnastic feats, with a gallery round it and a platform on which an orchestra was perched. This was completely surrounded by an admiring crowd. There were four musicians in red blowing away at their brass instruments, and in front was M. Bouret in a conspicuous costume, gesticulating, as if he were possessed, shouting as loud as he could yell, and all this to sell some pencils to the passers-by.

Savinien could not control his astonishment at the sight of a banker's right-hand man in such a costume, and, forgetting his sorrow, he stopped for a moment to contemplate this scene, and to listen to what the under-manager was saying. "They are worth four sous, and I am selling them for *only* five francs a-piece!" he shouted. "See, gentlemen, my pencils are gilded; they are indestructible; they are worth all the steel pens and goose-quills in the world; they are sharpened at both ends; they can be used to write love-letters, and to sign cheques. Do your hear, viscount?" added Bouret, catching sight of Savinien, "you can write declarations of love, or I O U's of fifty louis each to play at baccarat. Four, did you say, my noble lord? Here they are."

Savinien, stunned and bewildered, handed over a louis and fled, cursing the facetious financier who thus publicly called upon him in imitation of Mangin the quack, and who wore a dress very similar to that of the departed Parisian celebrity.

A little further on the viscount came upon an immense tent set up in the midst of a shady lawn. There was such a crowd in it that it was scarcely possible to find out what was going on inside. There were Dutch spinning-tops running steeple-chases, and "perfected" so as to be thus displayed, each top being of a different colour, and little leaden horses working on the roulette system as played at Monaco, the whole with money bets. As it may easily be believed, such extremely novel attractions as these drew a large crowd around the tables which, in addition, were presided over by elegant and attractive women of high standing—for gambling, being considered moral if its purpose be charity, is one of the greatest catch-pennies at a fair.

The highest stakes were a hundred francs, and a hundred louis might be won on such a bet. Savinien had only to watch the players to discover this, and he immediately recognised Glébof, who played with the same ardour as at the club, and was undoubtedly pursued by the same bad luck, for he did not appear to be pleased. The viscount, who did not care to talk to him, turned towards a table which he saw had been entrusted to the intelligent care of Madame de Gravigny. She was fulfilling her important duties with all the gravity of a croupier, and the exactitude necessary to the business, but she found time to talk to her friends, and as she had quite a fancy for Savinien she did not fail to call him to come to her. The round of the horses had just ended and the lucky number was being proclaimed.

"Quick, your five louis!" exclaimed the lady, "and sit down here by me. I want to bring you good luck, and have a little chat with you."

Savinien paid down his money, seeing no way to escape doing so. He did so with the better grace, as he hoped to obtain some information respecting Madame Montauron from the little countess.

"How do you think I am looking," she asked, without mincing matters in the least. "I was advised to dress as the Queen of Spades—an allusion to cards and gambling, you know!—but I thought I would do better than that, and so I contented myself with this bronze-green satin costume, and this little bonnet of steel lace. The thing is a perfect success, you see. No end of compliments on my appearance, and no end of money for the lucky orphans."

"You deserve the compliments," began the viscount, "and I——"

"Speaking of compliments," interrupted Madame de Gravigny, "I have just had one that I could very well have done without. Would you believe that Pinchard -you know, the usurer of the Rue Sainte-Anne—Pinchard, the scamp, has just told me that he won't renew my note? Did you ever hear such impertinence? And right in the midst of a charity fair! I'll bet anything that he only came here to say that spiteful thing to me, and after that he won the only round that has been won at my table. These low people are always lucky in money matters. By good luck I can afford to laugh at his threats. How about yourself?"

"Me!" stammered Savinien, who was far from expecting such a question.

"You don't care either, do you? I'm sure I don't know why I mentioned the disagreeable fellow to you. I had better be giving you a use

ful hint, however. If you haven't yet seen Mademoiselle Fourcas you had better show yourself as soon as possible. There's a crowd about her, and new comers can't get near her."

"If I knew where she could be found I would go to her at once."

"She is selling cigars with Madame Montauron."

"What!" exclaimed Savinien, "are they going about through the crowd offering cigars to the passers-by?"

"Not at all! Customers come to them. They have a kiosk set up expressly for themselves, and I can assure you that they are doing a brisk business for the benefit of the orphans. I shouldn't be surprised if they make more than I do, although I have already taken five hundred louis. But Mademoiselle Fourcas's millions draw better than my little horses. Where's the young man who wouldn't be glad to buy a box of bad cigars from the heiress, and pay two hundred francs for it? It is like taking a lottery ticket, and the prize is her splendid dowry. One and all, they think that the heiress may be struck by their appearance, and that the money won't be thrown away. I am not in the matrimonial market myself, unfortunately. That's why I do not draw as well. I feel altogether inferior."

"But you are not inferior."

"Do you know, now, that you have really a chance in that quarter? You look as if you didn't know it. Well, then, I assure you that you have. You may believe what I say. I know what I am talking about, and I can certify that the fair Julia likes you very much indeed. How have you progressed in your courtship since the famous Friday when you accompanied her while she sang the 'Erl-King?'"

"I have seen her but once, and that was by chance."

"What! Haven't you called upon her guardian?"

"No. I did not even think of calling."

"That is unpardonable. You must do so at once."

"But, madame, why should I?"

"Good heavens! do you mean to let such a chance as that slip through your fingers? You would be sorry as long as you lived. I advise you to make haste, though, for you have some formidable competitors. There's a marquis, a member of the Jockey Club, and that is enough to turn the uncle's brain, and the niece's, too. He isn't as good looking as you are, but he is not at all bad looking, either. I'll bet anything that he is hanging round the 'tobacco-stall' at this moment. You had better not let him have things all his own way."

Savinien was about to ask a question which the lady's interruptions had constantly prevented him from enunciating, but this time again she would not allow him to say a single word.

"What is the number of your ticket?" she suddenly asked.

"Seven, I believe."

"You have lost, then. See, the horse that belongs to that ticket is distanced by three lengths. The horse ahead of him is mine, and in advance of that comes number nine. I must speak to the winner. I wish you had been the man; but, at all events, the winner isn't that abominable Pinchard. Besides, you'll be luckier another time. Will you begin again? No. You had rather buy a cigar of Mademoiselle Fourcas than bet on my horses, and I don't blame you, for my part."

With this Madame de Gravigny turned to one of the bettors, saying: "Have you number nine, sir?"

Viscount d'Amaulis profited by this opportunity to leave the table

where he had lost five louis and his time besides. At a turn in the walk he came upon his cousin Adhémar, who said to him, in a jocular tone:

"For mercy's sake tell me what I am to do with these odious boxes?" and he held out a couple of cigar boxes with both hands. He had yet two more, one under each arm.

"Where did you get them?" asked Savinien.

"At a booth where you are now going, most likely. Madame Montauron is there, and Mademoiselle Fourcas is selling abominable cigars over a counter, with her own snowy hands. This is what has made me assume the appearance of an errand boy from the Grand Hotel. I am taking away a thousand francs' worth of 'unsmokables,' and I would give ten louis to get rid of my boxes. I should like to pitch the whole lot behind some of these trees."

"That would be highly improper."

"Of course it would. I cannot, with any decency, ask you to take one or two boxes, as you will be laden like me in five minutes from now."

"I hope not. Cigars at that price are too dear for me."

"Do you think that I wanted to buy them? But what can a man do when Mademoiselle Fourcas is the dealer? Between ourselves, I think that she took a malicious pleasure in loading me with these horrid things. It is a good way to stop a conversation which prevents one from making sales. The unlucky buyer bends beneath the weight of his purchases, presents an appearance altogether too ridiculous, and yields his place to some one else. Such is my experience, and I trust that yours may not be the same."

"I think not. Mademoiselle Fourcas only treats her friends in that way, and I have not set eyes on her since we met in the Bois de Boulogne."

M. de Laffemas understood at once the meaning of this remark, and very frankly replied: "My dear cousin, you cannot have forgotten that on the morning of that happy day, as we were leaving the Allée des Poteaux, you assured me that I should not be interfering with your plans by paying attention to Mademoiselle Fourcas. It was a generous assurance on your part, for she likes you very much, and if you chose to court her yourself, you would have every chance of success. But, as you leave the field free, I have a right to take advantage of your own assurances and advance my own pretensions."

"Certainly you have, and I suppose that you have succeeded."

"I am getting on very well, and as I wish to be perfectly open with you, I must tell you that, thanks to that worthy Bricourt, who showed me the stables, I have made the acquaintance of Monsieur Fourcas, the uncle, and won his favour. It was not difficult, I must admit. He is fond of people with titles. He was immensely pleased when I proposed getting him an invitation, this autumn, to my friend Chadeuil's château."

"His niece is probably fond of titles, also."

"Not at all! But I hope to bring her over. She would not be a woman if she could not understand the charm of select society. It is no easy thing to open the doors of our set to the daughter of a man of money. But I have hit on an ingenious plan. Chadeuil and his wife, to whom I have confided my projects, have promised me to come to this fair. This will give an excellent opportunity for an introduction to Monsieur Fourcas and his niece. An invitation to a grand hunt will follow, and it remains for me to do the rest. Am I frank, or am I not?"

"I am greatly obliged to you, cousin, for speaking so plainly,' said Viscount d'Amaulis, somewhat stiffly.

"It is quite natural that I should tell you just how I am situated. You are more than my relative, you are my friend, and I hope that we shall never have any secrets from one another. But let me ask you if you are still waiting for Aparanda's seconds to appear?"

"I have not the least expectation that they will do so."

"You would do as well to refuse to receive them if they took it into their heads to do so now. I am delighted that the affair has stopped short as it has. That man is a good-for-nothing fellow, and you would have done him too much honour in fighting with him. You never go now, I believe, to the club which he honours by his patronage?"

"No. And I shall soon hand in my resignation."

"That would have a good effect as regards the Jockey. You know that there is an election there next week. I have good hopes for you, but I should like to be able to say that you resigned your membership at the Plungers' as soon as you knew what it amounted to. This sacrifice, which can't be called such, will get you ten white balls more."

"I shall make it. But let me ask you whether you met Pinchard here."

"I should think so, indeed! He says that he expects his money on the fifteenth of June, the monster! Did he call upon you to come to terms by that date?"

"Yes, and I must confess that I am very much put out by it."

"Don't be uneasy; the race for the Grand Prize of Paris will set us going again. But I must leave you now, as I intend making a present of these cigars to my coachman outside. He alone is capable of smoking them, and I already have cramps in my arms from carrying them about. I shall be back directly to look up Chadeuil, and I shall no doubt see you again. You are going to the kiosk, are you not?"

"Yes, I must pay my respects to Madame Montauron," replied Savinien eagerly. "Where is the kiosk to be found?"

"Just over there behind that clump of chestnut-trees. I will join you there if you will wait for me."

"Thanks, and good-bye till I see you again," replied Savinien, who now succeeded in making his escape, and found himself, after walking on a little way, in front of a handsome wooden building, run up at the edge of a broad walk in the midst of flowers.

It was a kiosk such as might have been found on the banks of the Bosphorus, and the architect who had built it had evidently been inspired by recollections of the East, for his construction was as near as possible a copy of the building which stands near the celebrated "Fountain of Ahmed" at Constantinople. Below a varnished roof raised at its angles there were gilded wirework openings, and—instead of marble basins filled with limpid water—any number of rosewood shelves covered with cigar-boxes.

Mademoiselle Fourcas was standing in front of these shelves, besieged by gentlemen, and very busily distributing the cigars handed to her by Madame Montauron, who, seated upon a raised platform in the middle of the kiosk, received money on all sides, throwing it uncounted into a basket by her side.

Savinien stopped a moment to look at the sight. Julia Fourcas, in a simple white dress, had never seemed to him so pretty. Madame Mon-

tauron, in a dress of dull red watered faille, had never looked more beautiful. As he advanced he created a decided effect, for Madame Fourcas turned red, and Madame Montauron turned white.

He bowed without embarrassment, however, although the situation was a trying one, and was drawing out his purse to pay for a purchase to make himself the more welcome, when the heiress addressed him in these words:

"It is heaven that sends you, Monsieur d'Amaulis. We are almost distracted, and Madame Montauron is nearly exhausted. Come and help us."

"What, mademoiselle, would you have me take your place?" asked Savinien. "The buyers as well as the poor would lose too much by that!"

"That isn't the question. Men don't know how to sell, but they know how to count, and how to take down boxes. I myself get confused as to the payments, and Madame Montauron is half dead with handing me cigars. You can be our cashier and our shop-boy, too."

"But, mademoiselle, I——"

"Oh, no objections! My patroness here ordered me to engage your services as soon as you appeared. You come late, but you can make up for lost time."

"By buying all the cigars that you wish to sell me?"

"No! no! not now! I have other customers to serve. You must wait until I am not so busy. It isn't your money we want but your help. Go round to the door of the kiosk and come in. The door is over there!"

Savinien felt that he must needs obey. Madame Montauron, having thought of this plan for talking with her champion, would not have forgiven him had he failed to turn it to account. So he freed himself from the throng of people gathered around the counter, who looked enviously at him while Mademoiselle Fourcas so flatteringly welcomed him, and reached the door which she had designated. He had only to push it open to penetrate into a retreat ingeniously constructed so as to shield the ladies of the kiosk from all eyes whenever they chose to enter it. Behind pyramids of cigar-boxes were several bamboo chairs, a toilet-table with all its accessories, and a table covered with refreshments.

Savinien now found himself face to face with Madame Montauron, who had risen and entered the retreat to meet him.

"Forgive me," said she, in a low tone, "for asking you to come here. I feared that I should not find one moment's freedom during the whole time of the fair, and I must speak to you at all hazards."

"Four boxes of cigars, sir, if you please," said Mademoiselle Fourcas, pulling Savinien by the sleeve, and while he was handing them to her she added, in a whisper: "Why have I not seen you since you frightened me so much?"

"Frightened you! How?" stammered Viscount d'Amaulis.

"Would you deny that you had words with that foreigner?"

"But, mademoiselle——"

"A quarrel," interrupted Mademoiselle Fourcas, "of which I was perhaps the cause. If I had not been with you, you would have returned that man's bow. I have been dying of anxiety for three days past. It is very bad behaviour on your part."

"Could I suppose that you——"

Here Mademoiselle Fourcas suddenly returned to the counter and began distributing her cigars with many smiles.

"Don't you know that she is in love with you?" asked Madame Montauron in a low tone.

"With me, madame!" exclaimed Savinien, overcome with astonishment.

"I am sure of it, and, in the horrible situation in which I find myself, it is a consolation to me to think that I have contributed to the happiness of the only friend remaining to me."

"Let us speak of your troubles, I beg of you, madame," said Savinien, without referring to the other matter. "What has been done? What is this man doing? Has Brigitte discovered anything?"

"Nothing! nothing! I am ignorant of what he may have done with my daughter, and the delay which he has granted is about to expire. I hardly exist; I cannot endure what I am suffering! Whatever may be the consequences, even though they be ruin, even though I might find myself forced to confess all to my husband, I cannot continue as I now am! I rely on you alone to help me."

"What can I do?"

"Recover my casket, no matter what happens in consequence."

"You no longer fear Monsieur Montauron's appearing on the moment, then!"

"Here are twelve louis, sir?" cried Mademoiselle Fourcas, coming towards the retreat. "Please put them in the cash-box, and be kind enough to count our receipts in that basket. I cannot count very well, and besides, I have no time."

"I will try, mademoiselle," replied Savinien, coming forward to receive the money.

"Do you know what reassured me?" resumed the young girl, in quite a different tone of voice. "It was the Marquis de Laffemas coming to the Avenue du Trocadéro expressly to tell me that you would not be obliged to meet that horrible man. He came expressly for that, or, rather, to be introduced to my uncle, and, between ourselves, I think he is courting me."

"I will attend to you, sir," resumed the young girl, turning away to serve a purchaser who was brandishing a hundred-franc note.

Savinien returned to Madame Montauron. He began to be bewildered as to which lady to listen to.

"My husband cannot control you," said she eagerly. "You deposited the casket and you have a right to take it back."

"Undoubtedly, but what if he sees it?"

"Do you think that he would attempt to wrest it from you?"

"If he did, I should know how to prevent it, but what should I do with the coffer itself?"

"I will tell you. My resolution is taken, and I——"

"Five louis more!" cried out the young lady, coming from the counter. "Well, sir, how does our money stand?"

"I am going to count it, mademoiselle," stammered Savinien, whose brain was beginning to whirl.

"Your cousin is here, did you know that? I have sold him a great many cigars. You cannot imagine how funny he looked when he had bought the whole pile of them!"

"I met him just now."

"Did he tell you that he was coming back with the Countess de Chadeuil, who intends honouring me with a most flattering invitation? But, great heavens! look!" suddenly exclaimed Mademoiselle Fourcas, "look at that woman! How strangely she is dressed! Isn't it the same woman who spoke to you in such a bold way in the Allée des Poteaux?"

Savinien looked into the crowd to find the person spoken of by Mademoiselle Fourcas, and he had no difficulty in recognising Anita, although she wore a costume which was far from creditable to her taste. Under pretence of exactly copying the fashions of the day of the Directory she had donned a hat of fluted tulle, ornamented with a tricoloured plume, and, over a skirt of orange satin covered with flounces of Spanish lace, she wore a coat of the style called *incroyable*, or *incredible*—as indeed it was at that period—a salmon-coloured coat with the front and flaps turned back, and blue bands across the breast: thereto was added a blue satin waistcoat with gold "frogs," while a couple of watch-chains, such as were worn in Barras's time, hung about her waist.

Her demeanour was as eccentric as her dress, and even giddier, and more calculated to attract attention. She looked as though she had come—as she had, in point of fact—to create a scandal by picking a quarrel with some lady of high social standing. It seemed as though she was trying to make everybody stare, in order the better to carry out her hidden purpose. Savinien already foresaw that a disagreeable scene was about to take place, a scene into which he would of necessity be dragged.

"It is really Madame Blue-Beard," resumed Mademoiselle Fourcas. "She has unparalleled boldness. You had better stand a little back, or she will begin to talk to you. You know by experience what she has the audacity to do," added the heiress, smiling somewhat sarcastically.

"I hope that she will not have the impertinence to come near you," stammered Viscount d'Amaulis, reddening to the roots of the hair.

"Oh, I can defend myself very well if she does, but you had better defend *yourself* by flying. Come, turn your back to her! You know that you have to count the cash."

Savinien, who was extremely vexed, controlled himself, and made up his mind to follow this somewhat sarcastic advice. He stepped back and leaned over the basket filled with gold and bank notes so as to be able to command his features. This brought him nearer to Madame Montauron, who was only too glad to be able to resume the conversation previously interrupted by Mademoiselle Fourcas.

"You can spare me the agony of confessing everything to my husband," said she to Savinien. "When you have regained possession of the coffer, keep it instead of returning it to me, and treat with Count Aparanda yourself. Offer him my diamonds if he will give me back my daughter. He will sell them himself."

"That is precisely what he proposed, and I refused. How can any confidence be placed in his promises? He would keep the diamonds and break his word."

"You can force him to keep it by demanding he should take you to the place where my daughter lives."

"But I should not know her."

"Brigitte will go with you, and when she has recognised my child she will pay her ransom and take her to a house which will be ready to receive her."

"Nothing proves that the count will consent to this," urged Savinien.

"Everything, on the contrary, does prove it. It is the money he wants, not the child. He knows what such diamonds as mine must be worth. Why should he refuse to make the exchange when it would give him two hundred thousand francs?"

Savinien was about to offer fresh objections, when Mademoiselle Four-

cas came towards him and said, in a low tone: "Don't turn round. The woman with the tricolour feather shows no disposition to go off. One would vow that she knows you are here. The worst of it is that there is a crowd around her already. If she stays much longer there will be a mob. Heaven knows what she will do next to astonish the gaping multitude. She is capable of buying cigars and smoking them in the park."

"Who are you talking about?" asked Madame Montauron, coming forward.

"Monsieur d'Amaulis will tell you. It will be a good punishment. I haven't the time. My customers want me." With this Julia returned to the counter, in front of which there was still a throng of gentlemen.

Savinien was obliged to explain matters as follows: "Mademoiselle Fourcas alludes to a woman who ought not to be here, a woman who makes herself much too conspicuous, and ought not to have been allowed to come here at all."

"I was afraid that something of the kind would occur, and that was why I did not wish that the fair should be open to the public. No one agreed with me in the matter, and it was simply decided that no woman should be allowed to enter without a gentleman. Some one must have been bold enough to escort this person."

Savinien became more anxious when he heard these words, for he concluded that Anita's escort was in all probability Aparanda.

"You know the woman, do you not?" said Madame Montauron. "Mademoiselle Fourcas seems to be afraid that she will speak to you."

"It is the actress who gave the card-party at which Count Aparanda was present."

"Count Aparanda!" exclaimed Madame Montauron, turning deadly pale. She immediately concluded that the count had accompanied the woman in question to the fair in order to insult her by bringing such a creature to her park. She summoned courage, however, to look up and examine Anita, who stood a little way off.

"What a dress! What a manner! What boldness!" said Madame Montauron. "How is it that Mademoiselle Fourcas can know her even by sight?"

"She saw her at the Bois de Boulogne. I was there escorting Mademoiselle Fourcas, who was riding. This woman passed by on horseback, and had the boldness to stop and speak to me."

"Ah! I understand now."

"I need not tell you how I received her. I don't think she will care to do the same thing again."

"It is better, however, that she shouldn't catch sight of you. Pretend to be counting the money and listen to what I still have to say to you. Should Monsieur Montauron come upon you when you are removing the casket say that it is yours. He will be obliged to content himself with your assertion."

"He cannot, as head of the Provincial Bank, take away a deposit belonging to a subscriber; but his mind will be made up, for he will recognise the coffer as yours when he sees it in my hands. I can bear the position in which this would place me, though it would be a strange one and hard for a gentleman to endure, for the more reason as Monsieur Montauron and Baron de Trémorin's nephew could hardly fight a duel. But what will you say, madame, when he asks you what has become of your diamonds?"

"I shall say that I have lost them or that they have been stolen; I will answer no matter what! Don't think of me, sir, think only of saving my daughter. My husband will not, perhaps, believe me, but he will never guess the truth; and even should he drive from his house I shall not shrink from my resolution, and I will expiate the just consequences of my fault without a murmur."

"No, he will not guess the facts, but he will believe that I, I whom he welcomed so cordially, have deceived him."

"Do you mean that he will believe that you are or have been my lover? That is impossible! Such a suspicion is absurd. I saw you for the first time when you came to Paris a month ago. I have scarcely seen you since. Doesn't he know, besides, that my most ardent wish is to marry you to a charming young girl, Mademoiselle Fourcas? And will he not soon learn that you are about to marry her?"

"I think not," replied Savinien, promptly.

"Must I, in order to convince you, question Julia? Ah! I should be happy indeed if I could prove to you this very day that you can, if you like, become her husband."

"Will you have the kindness, sir," called out Mademoiselle Fourcas, without raising her voice too much, "to take down that huge box which is on the top of that pyramid there and give it to me, but without turning round, as the befeathered female is still here. She is walking up and down, and stretching her neck out like an ostrich. She seems to be on the look-out for some one."

Viscount d'Amaulis did as the heiress requested, and while he was counting some money which she handed to him she said: "Oh! here he is! Here's the person whom the woman with the feather was waiting for! I felt sure it would be he! It is! it is Blue-Beard himself!"

Madame Montauron failed to understand whom the fair Julia was calling by the name of Blue-Beard, but Savinien at once understood her meaning, and his first impulse was to turn and face this odious foe.

It was, indeed, Count Aparanda, advancing proudly towards the beplumed princess. She caught sight of him, and leaving the throng which had gathered round her, went towards him. Savinien saw her take the Swede's arm, as if to proclaim that he was her escort.

What would the couple now do? Was it chance that had brought them together at this spot and time, or had they agreed to meet at a few steps from the stall presided over by the wife of the director of the Provincial Bank?

If they had chosen this particular spot, it was, assuredly, not without some motive, some hostile intent. Count Aparanda was well aware that in coming to this fair he was coming to M. Montauron's house, and it was the height of audacity to have done so with so conspicuous and outrageously dressed a woman. This bold bravado might be a sudden and fatal blow to the unfortunate mother of the child that he was so strangely abiding. How could that mother, who, as yet, did not know what was about to take place, be protected? Her attention was engrossed with what she wished her young protector to do on her behalf. While Mademoiselle Fourcas was talking to Viscount d'Amaulis, Madame Montauron had withdrawn to some little distance, and had not yet caught sight of the man whom she feared so much.

Savinien, for a moment, thought of leaving the kiosk to try and prevent anything further from occurring. But how could he effect this?

Madame Montauron would certainly ask him why he so suddenly deserted her, and his meeting with the count would take place too near the kiosk. She would not fail to witness all that transpired, and she would recognise her persecutor. It would undoubtedly be better to persuade her to retire behind the huge piles of cigar-boxes, but how could he find a reason for such a request, and for following her, if she consented to comply with it? Besides, the dastardly Aparanda had undoubtedly seen her, and was fully capable of stationing himself in front of the kiosk, and of remaining there till she came out.

"What was Mademoiselle Fourcas saying to you?" asked Madame Montauron.

"She is afraid this woman will come near us, and she thinks that you had better go away," replied the viscount, profiting by this opportunity to suggest the course which had occurred to him. "If you go to the further end of the kiosk you will be out of her reach, and we can converse at liberty."

Madame Montauron would have been only too glad to profit by the chance of being able to speak further of her wishes, but she could not forget that Mademoiselle Fourcas had been placed in her care.

"I cannot do so," she replied. "This young girl must not be left alone here. I promised her uncle that I would watch over her. It is not at the very moment when she is exposed to unpleasant contact that I ought to leave her alone. My duty is to keep close to her, and if the woman in question makes a scene I ought to be there to prevent it from going on."

Savinien could not find a suitable reply to this declaration. Besides, it was too late to prevent the encounter, for Anita, after talking for some time with her escort, now dropped his arm, and approached the counter at which Mademoiselle Fourcas was still attending upon her customers.

It was easy to see from her insolent air that she had an aggressive intention, and the men about her began to follow her out of sheer curiosity. At all times and in all places there are people who like to look on if they think that there is a quarrel or any exciting scene at hand.

The Swede kept back, to the great astonishment of Savinien, who expected to see him support Anita's evidently premeditated onset. He even seemed to be trying to disappear in the crowd which was stationed at a short distance from a stall which it was needless to approach unless one cared to expend at least a hundred francs. He disappeared so quickly that Madame Montauron did not see him at all. Her whole attention was for the moment fixed upon the impertinent woman who now looked as though she were about to besiege the kiosk.

Savinien had so placed himself as to help Madame Montauron or Mademoiselle Fourcas if they needed his intervention. On his left hand and somewhat in the rear, Madame Montauron held herself in readiness to intervene if her young charge were annoyed; she kept her eyes upon her and almost turned her back to the people scattered over the lawn. On the right hand and well in advance, Mademoiselle Fourcas continued serving her customers with perfect ease, although she saw the audacious Anita coming towards her with the gait of a drum-major, and holding a pretty purse with golden links in her hand.

"After all," thought Savinien, "she will, perhaps, content herself with throwing down a few bank-notes for the benefit of the orphans,

so as to dazzle the crowd of fools looking on. If Aparanda hides himself it is because he has no evil design."

Anita was now within a few steps of the counter. Some of the buyers made room for her to approach. "Mademoiselle," said she, taking a handful of gold from her purse, and chinking it in her delicately gloved hands, "I want to buy some Russian cigarettes."

"I have none," quietly replied the heiress.

"Ah, indeed! That is a pity. So much the worse for the poor, for I cannot carry a box of cigars, you know, and I meant to spend ten louis at this stall."

"You can easily spend them at some other one, madame."

"Oh, I know that very well, but it's not the same thing. I should have liked to take a pleasant souvenir away from this kiosk. But I can leave one here. Here are a hundred francs, mademoiselle."

"Have the kindness to give them to the lady-almoners, mademoiselle," replied the young girl, with perfect composure, "I do not do anything but sell."

"That is strange! I did not think you were so particular at these charity fairs. The other day at the fair for the Greeks of Chio, I saw a countess kiss one of my friends, who gave her a thousand francs on condition that she would do so."

Savinien, who, red with anger, was listening to Anita's remarks, thought that she had gone too far, and that it was time to prevent her from speaking further. Encouraged by a look from Madame Montauron, and forgetting that the poor woman's enemy was not far off, he stepped forward.

"Dear me! is it you, viscount?" exclaimed Anita. "Where have you been hiding? I haven't seen you in three weeks past, and I have been looking for you all the time. Since you are here I haven't spent my time for nothing. In the first place, here are my five louis which the young lady won't take, I do not know why, but *you*, at least, are a friend."

Mademoiselle Fourcas's calmness did not hold out against this malicious assertion. She had scorned Anita's insulting familiarities, but she became confused when Viscount d'Amaulis was brought into the discussion. Her face changed, and tears came to her eyes. Savinien opened his lips to reply sharply to the audacious attack of the Swede's favourite, but before he could utter a word an unlooked-for auxiliary suddenly appeared in the person of an elderly gentleman with grey hair and a white moustache who came forward to the railing in front of the counter, and looking straight in Anita's face, exclaimed in a firm tone: "I advise you to go away; this is no place for you."

"What, do *you* take sides against me, baron?" said Anita, with an attempt at careless indifference which ill accorded with the embarrassment visible on her countenance.

It was very evident that this "baron," whoever he might be, had some power over her, and that his interference intimidated her. "Don't insist upon remaining," said he, "and go at once, unless you wish me to use other means to oblige you to do so."

Anita was choking with anger, but she apparently realised that she was not the stronger, and so got ready to retreat.

"I did not come here alone," she stammered, looking about her to see what had become of her escort.

At this moment Aparanda made his appearance. Madame Montauron

who was engaged in consoling the pretty Julia, did not catch sight of him at once.

"What are you interfering for, sir?" said the Swede to the gentleman whom Anita had addressed as "baron." "This lady came here with me, and *I* am ready to answer you if you have anything to say in the matter."

"Very well," replied the gentleman, who appeared to be an elderly officer of rank, perhaps a retired general, "it is to you, then, that I will address myself, and as it is not necessary for these ladies to hear what we may have to say, be kind enough to follow me to the end of this lawn."

This invitation did not suit Aparanda, who was evidently trying to prolong the scene, but he could not decline, as all eyes were upon him, and he saw too late that he had taken the wrong tack. Had he been dealing with Savinien d'Amaulis he would not have feared the scandal of a discussion, as his adversary would have been restrained by the peculiarities of the position, but this baron, who evidently belonged to good society, had certainly some strong reasons for treating Anita with such severity, and Madame Montauron's presence did not at all restrain him from showing his scornful displeasure or induce him to spare the actress's escort, and he started towards the grove from which he had emerged a moment before. Anita's defender followed him, and a discussion began between them, lively enough to judge by the gesticulations, but carried on in a tolerably low tone of voice.

Anita, finding herself no longer supported, had quietly beaten a retreat, and did not appear to be inclined to await the end of the dispute. Despite the course she was now pursuing, she was not really wanting in intelligence, and she saw that she had nothing to gain by taking part in the discussion, and indeed she began to regret having played the paltry, stupid, and spiteful part assigned to her by Aparanda.

Unfortunately, however, Madame Montauron had raised her head, and finding herself unexpectedly confronted by the man whom she had once so madly loved, and who had now become her enemy, and seeing him in the company of an actress of dissolute morals who had apparently entered the kiosk for the sole purpose of insulting her at his instigation, she could not endure so painful a shock, and fainted away. Savinien d'Amaulis had but time to catch her in his arms as Aparanda and the baron turned and left the counter, and to bear her to the further end of the kiosk, where she was protected from the gaze of malicious curiosity.

Fortunately the public was much less taken up with her swoon than with watching the result of Anita's pranks, and so the sudden disappearance of the banker's wife passed almost unperceived by the buyers and the idlers gathered near by. Mademoiselle Fourcas alone guessed that something extraordinary had taken place, and showed unusual coolness. The case was an embarrassing one. She would have preferred to have gone to Madame Montauron's assistance, but her instinct as a woman warned her that she would be in the way if she did so, and besides, by leaving her post at the counter she would only attract additional attention to the affair, which would at once become the subject of general comment. So she remained at her post and waited upon the gentlemen who came up, smiling with apparent carelessness as she took their money, paying equal attention to one and all of them, and even taking care not to glance towards the spot where the quarrel brought about by Anita's behaviour was going on.

Meantime, Madame Montauron, pale and trembling, said to Savinien: "I am lost!"

"Lost?" replied the viscount. "What! because that miserable scoundrel has had the audacity to exhibit himself here with a reckless woman?"

"This infamous act is equal to a declaration of war. It is as though he gave me to understand that he will no longer hesitate at anything."

"I shall not hesitate at anything either," replied Savinien. "He has gone too far now, and I wish to bring this matter to an end. To-morrow, madame, I will do what you requested me to do a moment ago. I will take back your casket, no matter what may happen, and I will go to Count Aparanda and force him to make terms."

"I don't wish you to expose yourself to danger on my account. Promise to let me know if he tries to drag you into a duel. You cannot fight with him! I would rather throw myself at my husband's feet and confess everything to him."

"In that case Monsieur Montauron would be obliged to fight with him! But there will be no fighting, at least so I hope, not even with the kind gentleman whom I am longing to thank for his generous intervention. By driving this woman away he has protected Mademoiselle Fourcas from the most odious impertinence."

"You remind me that the poor girl is all alone, and that it is my duty to return to her," said Madame Montauron, rising, although still pale and weak from her recent swoon. "To-day I must not think of myself, and I shall not abandon Julia, even although this unscrupulous coward should again insult me."

On returning to the front of the kiosk, Savinien now found that the aspect of matters had changed. There were more customers than ever at Mademoiselle Fourcas' counter, but the Swede and the gentleman who had prevented either some outrageous scandal or an absolutely fatal result from Anita's impertinence, had both of them disappeared. Anita had also vanished, and the idle lookers-on had dispersed. Promenaders who had freshly arrived were coming up on every side.

Savinien, reassured, saw one whom he did not care to wait for in the kiosk. It was Adhémar de Laffemas, rid of his boxes, and approaching along a by-path. Savinien resolved to yield him, without demur, his own place near Julia Fourcas, with whom the marquis evidently desired to resume his flirtation. So the viscount escaped while Madame Montauron was talking with her young charge, cutting across the lawn in order to reach the shade of a convenient hedge. But he had counted without his cousin, who accosted him, asking, "Are you running after Anita?"

"No, indeed! Why do you ask me such a question as that?"

"Because I just met Cavaroc, who has been telling me a pretty tale about this woman's strange behaviour."

"Who may Cavaroc be?"

"Colonel Cavaroc, don't you know? He is one of my club friends. It appears that just now he went to the kiosk where Mademoiselle Fourcas sells cigars, and arrived there at the moment when Anita was behaving in the most audacious manner. He knows her low origin, and it is said that she has swindled one of his friends out of a deal of money, so that she cannot very well afford to make an enemy of him. He had only to say a word to her to make her take flight. But the funniest part of the story is that Aparanda took sides with her. He has found a rough customer to deal with, however, for Cavaroc isn't to be trifled with, and is a perfect master with all weapons. He gave a thorough tongue-lashing to that

scamp, who left him saying that he would send his seconds to him *to-morrow*. I told the colonel that he need not expect them then or ever, and I gave him the fullest particulars as to this individual. But I shouldn't be surprised if something more resulted from all this, as Cavaroc is the very man to box the Swede's ears the first time he meets him."

Savinien said nothing. He thought that he had no time to lose in carrying out Madame Montauron's instructions, and he now longed to leave the fair.

"It would be a good thing if he did," resumed Adhémar; "but I see that you want to go, and I must give you a message confided to me. A person who knows you, and knows that I am your cousin, told me just now that Monsieur Montauron was looking everywhere for you."

"Indeed!" replied Savinien. "What can he want with me?"

"If he wants to give you unlimited credit, I shouldn't refuse if I were you, and I should like to be in your place if he does so," replied M. de Laffemas, laughing. "I must leave you now, my dear fellow," he added, "I have not the honour of knowing Monsieur Montauron, who must, moreover, wish to speak to you privately, and I want to go to Mademoiselle Fourcas' kiosk. Now that I have paid my quota, and have no more boxes to carry, I am going to try to get inside. I heard that you were there just now."

"Madame Montauron wished to have my help," replied Savinien, "the two ladies couldn't wait on all the purchasers that came."

"Then they must be badly off now that you have deserted them, and I hope they will take me in your place. Ah, cousin, if I succeed in pleasing that fair young lady over there, I shall be under obligations to you all my life, for without you I should never have become acquainted with this charming creature with such beautiful eyes and such a beautiful fortune!"

"Good luck go with you, cousin," replied Viscount d'Amaulis, somewhat drily.

Taking a side path, he now went on, resolving to trust to chance to meet M. Montauron. The path which he was following passed in front of the tent where the dairy was installed, and a crowd of pretty women dressed as milk-maids were busy there. At the gate beyond the tent, behind which stood the lady almoners and the young girls selling programmes, Savinien saw that there was an unusual stir. A group of people had scattered, and were following a couple whom he easily recognised. Every one was laughing, and jostling his or her neighbour. A clear space was left, however, to allow a man to pass along with a strangely attired companion, a woman.

There was almost a mob, and Savinien saw that Anita and her braggart cavalier were being escorted in a manner with which they would gladly have dispensed, and which was certainly far from flattering. As was always the case, whenever the Scandinavian appeared anywhere, he had excited dislike of the most obvious kind. He did not appear at all disposed to brave the thing out, for he was decamping as fast as possible. Savinien saw the pair get into a victoria, and they were driven off, while the crowd quietly wended its way back to the lawns and groves.

"Madame Montauron has guessed the truth," said Savinien to himself. "This man is prepared to commit some final infamy and then to decamp for ever, for he has placed himself under the absolute necessity of leaving

Paris by this conduct of his to-day. He has been in good society and he knows the customs there. He knows perfectly well the effect of his acts, and he must be aware that after such a performance he would be badly received, even at the Plungers' Club. He must, therefore, have made up his mind to go away, and as regards the unfortunate woman who is the object of his cruel and unaccountable persecution, he is about to proceed to the last extremities. He only appeared before her with Anita in order to terrify her, and he relies upon her fears of a final irrevocable scandal to make her submit to his exactions. She is right in saying that it is now too late to hesitate. I will recover the casket to-morrow, happen what may, and I will treat with this heartless villain for the ransom of the child. It will be difficult to manage, no doubt, but I have given my word, and I will carry the matter through. But when Madame Montauron has recovered her daughter, I shall steadfastly refrain from mixing myself up in her affairs."

As the viscount mentally came to this determination, a hand was laid upon his shoulder. He turned round and saw M. Montauron, who was all smiles, before him.

"Here you are at last!" said the banker. "I have been looking for you everywhere."

"I am sorry that you had so much trouble to find me, sir. My cousin, Monsieur de Laffemas, told me but a moment ago that you were looking for me."

"Were you about to leave?"

"I was looking——"

"At that creature who had the boldness to come here? She made a great mistake, it seems, and had a lively time of it before she got away. It is none the less to be regretted that she should have come, and I am very sorry that I did not follow my wife's advice in having some persons at the entrance who would know exactly whom to admit. I didn't think, I must say, that any man would be bold enough to come here with a woman of such behaviour and appearance."

"He is probably as objectionable as she is," muttered Savinien.

"I don't know what he may amount to by this time, but I am aware that formerly he was received everywhere. He left Paris a short time before my marriage took place, and came back quite recently, I am told. I had not seen him for thirteen or fourteen years, but I recognised him at once when I saw him pass by with that creature on his arm. I remembered his name when I saw him. He is a Swede, and he is called Count Aparanda. But you were there, were you not, when his companion was trying to get up a scene? Tell me exactly what took place."

"Nothing of any consequence," replied the viscount, with no little embarrassment. "She spoke improperly to Mademoiselle Fourcas. Colonel Cavaroc, who, it appears, knows who she is, silenced her. The foreigner interfered, but the colonel soon reduced him to silence in turn, and the whole affair did not last three minutes."

"So I was told; but I should like to know whether Madame Montauron was concerned in the matter directly or indirectly."

"Not in the smallest degree, sir, I can assure you."

"So much the better, for had this man insulted her I should consider it my business to punish him, and I don't care to have anything to do with a fellow who has lost his social standing. But let us say no more about the matter, and do me the favour to come with me," said the

banker, passing his arm through that of Savinien, who timidly asked: "May I inquire where you are taking me?"

"To the kiosk where Mademoiselle Fourcas is effecting such splendid sales to the great advantage of the orphans."

"Excuse me, but I have just left it," replied Savinien.

"So much the better. When a man has seen Mademoiselle Fourcas once he naturally wishes to see her again."

"Certainly; but there is a great crowd there, and I should be afraid——"

"You might be in the way of your cousin, the Marquis de Laffemas?" interrupted M. Montauron. "Have you made up your mind, then, to leave him master of the field?" he added, laughing.

"What do you mean by that, sir?"

"Why! he is making fierce love to Mademoiselle Fourcas. I know that from good authority; and only yesterday I should have earnestly begged you not to yield your place to him, but within an hour I have changed my mind with regard to the matter, and it is not because I wish to take you back to that charming young lady that I now ask you to accompany me."

Savinien turned slightly pale. It seemed to him that M. Montauron's lively manner was assumed to hide something of a serious nature, and that he was about to confront him with his wife.

"I am not thinking of Mademoiselle Fourcas," added the banker, "but there is some one there who is impatiently looking for you."

"I confess that I cannot guess who it is," said Savinien.

"I hope not! If you did guess, the effect of the meeting would be thrown away. It is a surprise which I have in store for you."

"I am at your orders, sir."

"An agreeable surprise, mind. It would have come about sooner if I could have managed it, but as it is you will not lose anything by the delay, I will answer for that. Come, my dear sir, it is only a step from here. You cannot imagine," added the banker as they walked on, "how difficult it was to arrange everything for this fair."

"It is a complete success," said the viscount.

"Everybody had some motive in wishing to help in it. Young girls on the look out for husbands, women who wanted to deepen the impression which they had already made upon some admirer, others who wished to be remarked as having made the largest sales. all these had motives for making themselves conspicuous, and among the latter, some, I know, would empty their own pockets to display a better filled cash-box than those of the other stalls."

"So much the better for the poor."

"True, but I assure you that these ladies trouble themselves very little about that part of the matter. If charity were their object they would give the poor the money which they spend on the dresses they are displaying here."

"You are too severe, sir."

"No, I am just. The proof is that they will abandon their posts at night time, because their charming faces and pretty dresses cannot then be seen to so great advantage. The park is so large that it cannot be lighted to seem like daylight. Then the men will profit by the dimness to purchase a great deal less or not at all."

"You do not spare your own sex," said Savinien, laughing.

'No. But you will confess, my dear sir, that you did not come here on account of the poor orphans for whom the fair is given, although you have handed some money over to our lady-almoners, no doubt.

"No, I did not come on their account alone, but still——"

"It is not a reproach I make," interrupted the banker, "the gainers will be the poor girls whom you would not have thought of helping if Madame Montauron had not thought of giving the entertainment."

"You will confess that Madame Montauron, at least, had nothing to gain by all this!" said the viscount.

"Who knows? She has the pleasure of taking charge of Mademoiselle Fourcas, and bringing her out. She is very fond of her, and wishes to marry her to some one worthy of her. I hope that she will succeed, and I don't wish to detract from her merit. She will prove her disinterestedness by remaining here to-night when all the other ladies will have left their maids to sell in their place."

All these sarcastic as well as pleasant remarks were made in a tone of voice which finally quieted Savinien's anxiety. M. Montauron would not have jested like this, thought he, if he were about to effect some conjugal stroke, but what could be the "surprise" he meditated?

On drawing near to the kiosk, Savinien did not see Mademoiselle Fourcas, so numerous were the purchasers about the counter, but he saw Madame Montauron, who stood with her back towards him, hiding in this way some person to whom she was speaking, and who had passed behind the counter.

At this moment a man whom the viscount had not observed, although he stood near by facing him, stepped out of a group of people, and came towards Savinien and the banker.

"Here is my 'surprise,'" said the banker, laughing.

"My uncle!" cried Savinien.

"Himself!" cried M. de Trémorin.

"That is not all," muttered M. Montauron, smiling, and watching the warmth with which the uncle and nephew greeted one another, while he stood aside.

"You in Paris, and without letting me know!" exclaimed Savinien, reproachfully.

"You would have known it this morning," replied M. de Trémorin, "had you not moved away from the hotel without writing to me anything about it."

"Did you go to the Rue du Helder hotel?"

"Of course I did. Where else should I go? I have not any rooms in the Rue Rembrandt."

"So you know that *I* have?"

"I know fine things about you, and I am not sorry that I came here. It was high time I did, for it seems that you have been going on at a high rate since you left Plouër. Is it with your letter-of-credit that you spend twenty thousand francs in rooms?"

"No, certainly not, my dear uncle, but I will explain to you."

"No matter! Montauron has told me enough, and I am not in the humour to scold you just now. Some one else will do that presently. Come with me and thank your landlord who has given you good advice, although he was wrong to let you such expensive rooms. But I'm sure that you have never followed his advice whatever it was."

All this was said in a hearty and affectionate tone, which would have

reassured Savinien, even had he not known the character of the excellent man who had been a father to him from his childhood upwards.

Baron de Trémorin was a solidly built native of Brittany, about fifty years old. His beard, which he wore unshorn, had but slightly turned greyish, and, although he was not dressed in conformity with the latest fashions, he had an air of distinction. His face was expressive of goodness above everything else, tempered, however, by a certain roughness of manner which did not trouble his nephew at all.

"Montauron!" exclaimed the baron, "come here and see how Monsieur d'Amaulis, the last of his race, looks since he has seen me! I have a great mind to carry him off with me, to lecture him at my ease."

"My wife will never forgive you if you deprive her of his company and your own also, my dear baron," replied the banker.

"The fact is that I have scarcely said two words to Madame Montauron. I had not been talking to her more than ten minutes when I saw you dragging my nephew along with you."

"She was very happy to see you again."

"So happy that she almost fainted away when you brought me up to her. It must be allowed, however, that she did not expect me, and that shows, my dear friend, how discreet you are. I requested you not to reveal that I was coming, so as to surprise this bad fellow Savinien. You thought that I included everybody. So I must apologise to your wife for startling her so much. Let us go back to her."

Savinien was no longer afraid, but felt somewhat taken aback, and already thought of the change which the unforeseen arrival of M. de Trémorin would cause in his relations with Madame Montauron. He was not allowed time for reflection, however. His uncle drew him on towards the kiosk. The banker preceded them, and led them through the side-entrance.

"Savinien!" cried a silvery voice. And at the same moment Savinien beheld before him his cousin Yvonne, who threw her arms around his neck and kissed him upon both cheeks.

The tableau thus afforded was perfect. Savinien's uncle was laughing heartily. M. Montauron looked delighted, his wife was controlling her emotion, which almost displayed itself by tears. Yvonne seemed ashamed of having yielded to her first impulse, and Savinien himself was covered with confusion, and scarcely dared to raise his eyes.

At a short distance from them, pale and trembling, Julia Fourcas looked on without remembering to serve a fine gentleman who wanted to buy some cigars. She had just discovered that she had a rival, and realised that Viscount d'Amaulis would never become her husband.

V.

On the day after the fair given for the home for destitute girls in the park attached to the Montauron mansion, at an hour when all the fair saleswomen were still asleep, Baron de Trémorin, his daughter, and his nephew were finishing their breakfast at the Lion d'Or, an annex to the hotel where the owner of the Manor of Plouër had put up, and where Savinien's adventures had commenced five weeks previously. The repast, although an early one, had been most substantial The baron was a hearty eater and drinker.

Since they had sat down M. de Trémorin had joked away continually, without saying one word respecting his nephew's conduct during his sojourn in Paris. Savinien did not know what to think, as he had expected a long lecture and a severe questioning. On the evening before, after the meeting at the kiosk, his uncle had bidden him good evening, but had told him to come on the following morning to the restaurant annexed to the Rue du Helder hotel, where they now found themselves. M. Montauron, having invited the uncle and niece to dinner—a rapid dinner, without ceremony, which would admit of his wife's return to the fair in the evening—there was nothing for Savinien to do but go off.

He did not need to be urged to do so, for his position as regarded his cousin and Mademoiselle Fourcas would have been very embarrassing, and besides, he needed to be alone to think of the decisive venture he was about to make, and how he could assure its success, for M. de Trémorin's arrival from Brittany did not free him from his promise to bring matters to an issue with Count Aparanda.

Since he had seen Yvonne again he felt himself fortified against the temptations of Paris, and did not in the least regret having left a free field to Adhemar de Laffemas as regards the heiress. Yvonne, the pretty creature, with her big blue eyes, her rosy cheeks slightly tanned by the open air, her light brown hair falling in delicate ringlets upon her snowy forehead, was so very lovely, and appeared so happy to see her cousin again, and made so little mystery in hiding her innocent love—easily to be read in her limpid gaze—that Savinien felt as though his entire youth had risen before him again and he experienced its charm anew. He saw himself once more running across the moors covered with the heather-bloom of spring, gathering furze-blossoms of the tint of amethysts, and rushes golden like the sun.

The remembrance came to him of dreams of a cloudless future, the happiness of the wise who know how to be satisfied with their own lot. Mademoiselle Fourcas' millions offered him no such temptation, and her dazzling type of beauty did not for him possess the charm, the pathetic grace of that of Yvonne de Trémorin. He thought that it depended only upon himself to make her Viscountess d'Amaulis. At least he hoped so. He believed M. de Trémorin entertained the same views regarding him as when he had set out for Paris. A returning Crusader, he dreamed of his marriage as a reward for his prowess on the battle-field of Parisian temptation, for he did not consider himself to have been otherwise than brave.

Coffee was now brought in, and Yvonne entertained herself by picking out the best cigars from a box brought in for her father to choose from.

"My lad," said M. de Trémorin, suddenly, "you lost a fine sight last night. If you had returned to the fair you would have seen your cousin sell a hundred and fifty boxes of cigars worth a penny each, at the rate of two hundred francs each. There was one gentleman who paid twenty-five louis for his box."

"What!" exclaimed Savinien. "Yvonne, too?"

"What do you mean by 'Yvonne, too?' Are you surprised that she should be a success?"

"Not at all, uncle! But I should never have believed that she would have the courage to sell cigars to all those men who hung round the counter at the kiosk."

"Oh, I was very much frightened," said the young girl. "If Madame Montauron hadn't encouraged and helped me I think that I should have

run away. But I had to fill the place of the beautiful young lady who had been taking so much trouble for the sake of the poor. They must have lost a good deal by her going away, but I did the best I could."

"I did not know that she went away," said Savinien.

"Ten minutes after you left, cousin, she went away as well. She said she felt tired, so Monsieur Montauron went in search of her guardian, and he took her home. I was very tired also, for we spent the night in the train and I did not sleep two hours at the hotel, but I couldn't refuse to help Madame Montauron. She is so kind, so gentle! I never saw her before, but it seemed to me as though I had known her for a dozen years and loved her. If you knew how she spoke of you, Savinien, you would feel very much flattered."

"Yvonne, don't say another word! You would make a perfect coxcomb of Viscount d'Amaulis, who is only too greatly disposed to be one since he became a Parisian. Besides, you exaggerate. Madame Montauron only said he was not bad-looking, and seemed like a good sort of fellow," said M. de Trémorin.

"That is much more than I deserve, my dear uncle. I am convinced that if Madame Montauron thinks well of me it is because I am your nephew. It is the remembrance she has preserved of you which makes her welcome me as she does."

"That proves that she is a woman of good feeling, which I have never doubted."

"She is very happy, is she not?" asked Yvonne.

"Undoubtedly. Why do you ask that?"

"Because she is very sad sometimes. Yesterday, after the fair, when we left her she had tears in her eyes."

"You must have imagined that. Besides, the sorrows of grown women don't concern young girls," said M. de Trémorin. "Go and dress yourself to go out and visit our relations in the Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"There's plenty of time, father, as it is only noon now."

"Tut! tut! there's Jeannette looking for you now, and you will have plenty to do while I go out to attend to business matters. Besides, I want to talk to Savinien alone. Run back to your room."

"So soon!"

"What are you complaining of? There will be heaps of dresses and bonnets brought here for you to try on, for I want you to look well. Your cousin, Madame de Loudinières whom we are going to see, wants to find a husband for you in Paris."

"Not without my consent, I hope," said Savinien.

Yvonne, somewhat confused, went off to find her maid, a Breton girl, and the uncle and the nephew found themselves alone for the first time since they had met at the fair.

"Now let us talk, viscount," said M. de Trémorin, seating himself, as though he were going to take a ride, across a square-backed chair which looked as though it had been made expressly for a nobleman of the Middle Ages.

"How you speak, uncle!" said Savinien, although he knew very well that the baron did not assume the majestic expression he now wore when he meant to lecture him seriously.

"I speak in a tone suitable to the manner in which you have been conducting yourself. Be sure that you are now standing before a judge, and that you are on trial."

"To hear you, uncle, one would think that I had been guilty of some crime."

"Crime? No, but great and foolish mistakes, which is perhaps worse, as Talleyrand said of the assassination of the Duke d'Enghien."

"I confess that I was wrong to leave the hotel without letting you know, but I demand the right to set forth extenuating circumstances."

"Plead, my lad, plead! But I am not the sort of man who is put on a jury to be bamboozled by a lawyer's talk."

"Oh! I am not relying upon my eloquence to convince you; but you will permit me to remind you of the instructions which you gave me when I left you at Plouër."

"I should like to know how you will undertake to show that I told you to begin by ruinous folly."

"You told me to live for six months like a thorough Parisian."

"And you straightway discovered that thorough Parisians do not live at hotels? I might dispute that, as I know some who prefer doing so. But I will grant you that men who live in style prefer expensive rooms. That is no reason, however, for hiring rooms at three thousand francs' rent, and buying twenty thousand francs' worth of furniture."

"Thirteen thousand, uncle! I got it at a bargain."

"Yes, I know all about the bargains at the Hôtel des Ventes. If you had to sell the goods again you would not get six thousand francs for them. Then you forget the upholsterer's bill. I maintain my figure of twenty thousand francs. Do you know, nephew, how much your land at Trivagou, the only bit of land that your father left you, is worth a year?"

"Yes, uncle. My income isn't more than six thousand francs."

"Well, the land is not worth more than a hundred and twenty-four thousand. Supposing you sold what your father left you—which, at the rate at which you are going on cannot fail to happen soon—and invested your money at five per cent, which is not very easy, you would have nine thousand francs income.

"That is correct."

"Well, out of that amount you have spending one thousand per month. If you go on like this, in January you won't have a copper to receive. Utter ruin will be your New-Year's gift, my handsome nephew!"

"You are quite mistaken, uncle, for I am going back to Plouër."

"When are you going, if you please?"

"When you do, uncle, if you have no objections."

"That is an indefinite date, as you don't know whether I shall stay in Paris two weeks or a year."

"I hope that you will not stay here long!"

"You are very anxious, then, to return to Brittany?"

"I wish I were there now! I should have returned there a week ago if I had not been detained here."

"By whom and by what, pray? But I won't ask you, my lad. Still you will confess that if you really thought of going back, you are still more inexcusable in having gone to such expense respecting your rooms. As you say that you are tired of Paris, why did you do that?"

"If you knew, uncle, how it happened! I had almost nothing to do with it."

"Bah! you won't undertake to tell me that any one forced you to leave this good old hotel, where I have put up for the last thirty years

and where a man can be perfectly at home, and where I and mine are especially so?"

"I was very well satisfied; but supposing I told you that it was Monsieur Montauron himself who advised me to take these rooms?"

"In one of his houses? Well, he acted as landlords do who have houses to let. But you were free to refuse."

"Yes, but he insisted."

"You surprise me! I didn't think that he cared so much about letting his rooms."

"He very graciously spoke of the advantage he would derive from my being near his house. He told me that he could then call upon me in a neighbourly way, and he did so."

"You have not been often to call upon him. He has scarcely seen you for two weeks, so he told me. But let that pass. You got your furniture to please this rich banker, who does not know whether you are better than a beggar or not; but will you be good enough to tell me where you got the money to buy that magnificent furniture?" Then, as Savinien reddened, his uncle added, mildly:

"You had a credit of six thousand francs, aad I know that you have exhausted it, or nearly so. But that wouldn't have sufficed, for you have lived five weeks, and one cannot live in Paris on nothing. You must have paid for a part of your furniture, then, and run in debt for the rest of it."

The nephew made no haste to reply, and his embarrassment showed what it cost him to state the facts; but he replied at last, having a horror of falsehood: "I don't wish to conceal anything from you, my dear uncle, and I will tell you at once that by the strangest of chances I became possessed of a very large sum on the morrow of my arrival."

"By gambling?"

"No; by speculating at the Bourse."

"The deuce! I should have preferred that you had won it at cards. The Amaulis family have never speculated. How did you run into the brokers' set, and how did they give you credit? Tell me all about it, Savinien."

"You remember George Fougeray, one of my comrades at the law school at Rennes?"

"Yes. I invited him to dine with me whenever I went there to see you. He was a very intelligent lad—too smart, perhaps."

"Yes, indeed, uncle. He has applied his intelligence to getting rich, and has succeeded—half-way. He is engaged in speculation, and I think that he does not sufficiently reflect about the way in which he makes his money. Thus it was that one day he took me to the Bourse, as though to see a curious sight."

Savinien now gave his uncle a full account of the operation by which he had made the large amount of a hundred thousand francs, as well as of his unwillingness to receive it, stating how he had finally done so; but M. de Trémorin, instead of showing surprise, now quietly informed him that Montauron had already told him all about the matter, and that he was delighted to find that Savinien had no disposition to deceive him. Then, after advising his nephew to refrain from further speculations at any future time, he startled him by quietly advising him to aim at a rich marriage, a marriage with an heiress having millions of money. "Don't attempt to impose upon me!" exclaimed M. de Trémorin, as Savinien

protested. "You spend twenty thousand francs in a month, and you turn up your nose at a fortune. It is truly incredible!"

The confession of the losses at baccarat followed Savinien's assurance that he did not wish to marry an heiress, but only hoped to return to Brittany, which he now again repeated.

M. de Trémorin thereupon declared that there were hundreds of clubs in Paris which were no better than gambling-dens with an outward show of respectability, and that after being robbed at the Plungers' Club, Savinien was utterly in error if he supposed that he would be admitted to the Jockey, which was no place for a man of so small a fortune. It came out in the avowal of all that had occurred, that Savinien had lost his money at Anita's residence, and this he did not attempt to conceal. M. de Trémorin thereupon made various comments upon the scene which, so he had been told, had been occasioned by this woman at the charity fair, and ended by assuring Savinien that he was admirably fitted for Parisian life, and that after returning to Plouer he would at once discover that he could not live any other life than the riotous one which he had lately been indulging in. While praising Savinien for the frankness of his avowals, the baron still insisted upon this view of his nephew's disposition and character, and declared that resolutions at his age were not worth a straw, and that young men did not know what they really wanted.

"You are made for a position in what is called 'high-life,' and not for a 'gentleman-farmer's' life, which would never suit you. You are like a schoolboy who has just smoked his first cigar, you feel a little sick of it just now; but if you get over that—as you will—you will immediately want to smoke another. I return, therefore, to what I said before: you must marry a rich woman."

"In Paris, uncle?"

"You will not find one in Brittany. Heiresses are rare with us, and girls have small dowries."

"I don't care for the dowry."

"You are wrong there. A man is nothing in Paris unless he begins housekeeping with a hundred thousand francs income, at least."

"I don't care to be anything, then."

"That kind of talk is all very well in Béranger's songs, but real life is a different thing, my lad," was M. de Trémorin's retort. "I maintain that you would find it delightful to have a town-house, carriages, a box at the opera, a stable full of race-horses, and to be triumphantly voted in at the Jockey Club, at which you would be rejected if you remain as poor in pocket as you now are. I maintain that, after tasting of the exciting life which you have been offered in Paris, you wouldn't be able to settle down to the monotony of existence such as it would be with an old man like myself. You would die of boredom, and you would make us all uncomfortable. Your aunt, your cousin, and I find our life very happy, but you no longer belong to it."

"You drive me away, then!" said Savinien, very much grieved.

"Not at all. I only wish to spare you useless regret. You will always be welcome at Plouer, but I don't think that you are suited to a continued life there. Besides, it is time for me to free you from my guardianship. I have consented to take charge of your property until now, because you begged me to do so, and because I did not think you capable of taking good care of it yourself, as you are not acquainted with the proper manner of managing land and money matters. But this kind of partnership cannot

continue. You are of age, and have been so for three years already, and if you can't manage your own affairs now you will never learn to do so. I conclude that the time has come for you to begin doing so, and so I will hand you my accounts."

"But, my dear uncle, I don't ask you to do that," pleaded Savinien.

"I know that, but I insist upon handing your fortune over to you. Your affairs haven't suffered by my management of them, but it is not proper that I should continue directing them. You are no longer a boy, and if it were known that you still had need of a guardian, it might stand in the way of your marrying."

"I shall never marry any but a woman who knows us both."

"I certainly think that the woman whom you can marry if you like knows all about *you*."

"Of whom are you speaking?"

"Bless me! of the only one who is suited to you, and who is disposed to accept you on your own merits."

"Yvonne!" exclaimed Savinien.

"Yvonne? Oh, no! I am not alluding to her," said M. de Trémorin, coldly. "I am speaking of Mademoiselle Julia Fourcas, the orphan with five millions' dowry, a charming girl whom I saw yesterday, and who, according to Madame Montauron, is very much in love with you. It appears that you can obtain her hand in marriage by simply asking for it. Her uncle Fourcas is, I hear, very desirous that she should have a husband with a title, and he would willingly consent to let his niece become the wife of Viscount d'Amaulis. A month ago I should probably not have advised this marriage, which many people of our own rank would call a mésalliance, but now I warmly desire it for your own sake, for it will give you the wealth which has become indispensable to you."

"Mademoiselle Fourcas' millions are nothing to me," said the viscount. "If she had twenty instead of five, it would be all the same thing. I do not love her."

"You would, after a while."

"No, I shouldn't, because, as you very well know, I love another woman."

Baron de Trémorin looked grave, and after a moment replied: "I am glad, Savinien, to have this opportunity of speaking once for all, and clearly and decisively, of your sentiments towards my daughter and your engagement to her, if such it can now be called."

"I repeat," said Savinien, firmly, "that she is the object and the only object of my affections."

"I have so supposed."

"You must have known it very well."

"I was by no means sure of it, and I came to no positive conclusion on the matter. I wished to study your character, and to see you put to the proof before making up my mind. You are aware that it was for that reason I sent you to Paris."

"I suppose that if you took the trouble to do that it was because you thought me not unworthy of marrying my cousin."

"Unworthy! How can an Amaulis be 'unworthy?' On the contrary, I consider you quite good enough for a duchess. There is no 'unworthiness' in the question, which is only whether you are suited to Yvonne and she to you."

"I think that if you asked her that question——"

"I shall do no such thing," interrupted the baron, "She cannot be at the same time judge and plaintiff. I don't say that she does not fancy you, but it is my duty as her father to see whether the match would make her happy. I have been thinking of nothing else for years."

"And you have finally made up your mind to turn me off? What have I done to deserve such treatment?" exclaimed Savinien, in a tone of great excitement.

"Do not excite yourself, pray," said M. de Tremorin, "and let me tell you my reasons. You were brought up with Yvonne, and spent your boyhood with her as you might have done with a sister, had you had one. I thought that I was right in keeping you at Plouer. I was wrong. I do not regret bringing you up like my own son, nor need I tell you that I shall always treat you as such. But I ought to have foreseen what has come to pass. I ought to have guessed that you would become attached to Yvonne and she to you: that you might, notwithstanding, be unsuited to each other—for these early attachments often amount to nothing—and that a time would come when you would both of you find yourselves in a false position, and would tardily discover that you were both mistaken as to your mutual feelings."

"That time has not come, and never will come," said Savinien, energetically.

"How do you know that? I knew very well what I was about when I sent you away to a law-school for three years. I admit that you returned as much in love with your cousin as when you left——"

"A hundred times more in love, uncle."

"I grant you that, if you like; but Yvonne could not yet know whether her own attachment for you was not a transient one. I was not altogether sure as to you. I knew that your natural impulses were good, but you were all untried. I do not even know how Yvonne may feel, when she has seen something of the world. You see that I am almost brutally frank, but you are too intelligent to bear any grudge against me for my candour."

"I thank you for it, on the contrary, and for having given me the opportunity to prove that my heart will never change," said the viscount.

"You must admit, however," resumed his uncle, "that you have become quite another man during the short time that you have been in Paris. You will reply that it is your ardent wish to return to Plouer, but to that I am obliged to respond, that if you do, you will return alone, as it is my intention to spend the summer at Dieppe or Trouville, and to remain during next winter in Paris. Your aunt knows my plans, and will join me in the autumn."

"Your plans?" stammered Savinien.

"I make no mystery about them. It is my intention to introduce Yvonne into society here. She is a beautiful girl, and our relations in the Faubourg Saint-Germain will open us the doors of all desirable houses where a young lady of good family may find a suitable match. Don't protest, for I shall leave her free to choose. I don't take your name off the list of suitors, but I shall not allow her to marry for a full year yet, when she will have seen something of society."

"Has she consented to this?"

"My daughter is too well brought up to oppose her father's wishes. It is my duty to marry her suitably. She will not be poor, as she is my only child, and our income is thirty thousand francs a year; but she will not have a large dowry, and, while I am upon this subject, let me tell you that

certain reports as to the extent of my fortune are erroneous. There are persons who have set afoot a story to the effect that I am one of the largest shareholders in the Provincial Bank. This is not the case. Montauron does very well with my funds, but they are not so considerable. My daughter will have no 'millions,' unless through an unexpected alliance."

"She certainly will not have millions through marriage with me," muttered Savinien.

"That is true," replied M. de Trémorin smiling, "but I admit that wealth isn't happiness, although it contributes to it. All depends upon the disposition of the wife. Some women cannot be happy without riches, others care more for affection. As regards Yvonne, what may make her happy is yet to be known, and when she sees others than yourself her very love may change. This remains to be seen. For your own part, I maintain, as I said before, that the millions belonging to Mademoiselle Fourcas, or some other heiress, would be a fine thing for you to have."

"I give you my word of honour that unless I marry Yvonne I shall never marry at all," said Savinien.

"You may yet marry her, or you may remain single, as you say. This will be decided next winter. I wished to clear up matters, to tell you my plans, and inform you of the exact state of my fortune. Yvonne will have more money than you possess, and—although I don't think it any too much even with the addition of your own property—I shall not make that a reason for opposing your marriage if both of you continue to feel as you now do. But not a word more of your marriage for an entire year from now! Let us speak of the Montauron family, as we are on the subject of marriage, and its disadvantages in some cases. You know that Mademoiselle Aurélie de Louvigné had no money of her own when she accepted Montauron, who was already a rich man and has become much richer."

"Yes, and I also know that it was you who brought about the match, in spite of the inequality of fortune."

"When there is inequality it is much better that the wealth should be on the side of the man. Aurélie was an orphan, and she hadn't, like you—if I may pay myself that compliment—the advantage of having an uncle. Her cousin who had charge of her, only thought of bringing her out in the fashionable world, and was the cause of getting her into trouble, which led me to intervene in the matter and arrange a marriage for her, as I thought it my duty to do, for she was the daughter of one of my most intimate friends. The trouble which arose was not, however, of a serious character, and Montauron, whom I had some business connection with at the time, fell deeply in love with Aurélie, over whom, in view of counteracting Madame de Morvieux's recklessness, I succeeded in exercising a certain amount of watchfulness. I backed up Montauron's offer in the warmest manner, and I induced Mademoiselle de Louvigné to marry him, there being no serious reason why she should not do so."

As uncle Trémorin said these words, Savinien gave a sigh of relief. It was evident to him that his uncle was not acquainted with the actual facts. This statement did not coincide with that of Madame Montauron; however, Savinien believed that his uncle was stating the truth, as far as he knew it.

"The Montaurons are very happy, I flatter myself," added his uncle, "and I ought to congratulate myself, ought I not, on having made the match?"

"How can they be otherwise," replied Savinien, with pardonable bitterness, "as they possess the 'millions' about which you have had so much to say this morning?"

"Your answer is only fair," replied the baron, laughing, "but give me a positive reply. I ask you the question, as you have had the opportunity of judging. I have seen little of the pair for years, for although I have kept up business relations with Montauron, I have not written regularly to his wife, and yesterday I had scarcely an opportunity to say a word to her. Tell me all about them. I insist upon your doing so, for Aurélie appeared to me to be sad and anxious. I intend to find out the reason of this when I see her again, if possible, but, meantime, you can, perhaps, give me a hint as to what it is that is troubling her."

Savinien started and changed colour at this direct attack. He was not prepared for it, but he felt that, without compromising Madame Montauron he must still make some suitable reply. "I don't know," said he, hesitatingly. "She was, perhaps, greatly annoyed by the preposterous scene which a woman made at the kiosk just before you came there."

"Very possibly. It seems that it was a scandalous affair, and calculated to affect her very unpleasantly. Montauron gave me some little notion of what had occurred. What was it, exactly? Didn't an impudent sort of woman come to the kiosk with some man or other?"

"There was something of that sort."

"I was going to ask Montauron if he knew who the man was, but his wife changed the subject at that moment and I did not wish to annoy her by insisting. It even seemed to me that she did not wish to have anything said on the matter before her about the individual who was with the girl. You saw him, as you were there. You must know who he is."

"He is a foreigner, I believe?"

"That doesn't surprise me. Foreigners often do outrageous things. This man may know how to behave himself in his own country, although he chooses to act like a blackguard in ours. That is just what people get for making these foreigners so welcome, as Parisians are in the habit of doing. What country does this man come from? Is he a Prussian?"

"No, a Swede," replied Savinien, unguardedly.

"A Swede!" exclaimed M. de Trémorin, frowning. "What is his name?"

"Let me think," replied Savinien, pretending to have forgotten. "Why do you want to know!" he added at last as carelessly as he could.

"I have my reasons."

"Monsieur Montauron will tell you his name."

"Does Monsieur Montauron know this man, then?"

"I believe so."

"But yourself you saw him. What age is he? Is he a man with a full black beard, an aquiline nose, and a very marked cast of countenance? Is he between thirty-five and forty? Has he very bright black eyes, and does he remind one of Fra Diavolo?"

"You must know him, uncle, since you describe him so perfectly."

"Try to remember if he does not call himself Count Aparanda."

"That is the name," replied Savinien, after again pretending to try and recollect it.

"I understand now why Madame Montauron looked anxious," said Baron de Trémorin as though talking to himself. Then suddenly turning to his nephew, and giving him a searching glance, he added: "Savinien,

I saw that you hesitated just now about answering the questions I put to you. It is quite proper to be discreet with regard to any matter in which a woman is concerned even indirectly. Count Aparanda behaved yesterday in a manner which was all the more deserving of blame from the fact that he was formerly acquainted with the lady whom he insulted by bringing a worthless woman to the fair. You have been skilful enough to find this out, I see, and you did well to keep it from me, as you naturally supposed that I was ignorant of this Swede's very existence. But it seems that you know him, and I now beg of you to tell me all that you know concerning him."

"I know very little, uncle. He is living here at an expensive rate, plays high, and always wins."

"I'll venture to say that you have played cards with him."

"I am not the only one. He has drained the pockets of all my friends."

"How long has he been in Paris?"

"Only a few weeks."

"Where did you meet him?"

"At a club where George Fougeray had me elected without consulting me, and at the house of the woman whom he had the audacity to bring to the charity-fair, However, after I paid him what I lost to him at cards, I saw no more of him. I do not even bow to him."

"That is the correct line of conduct," said M. de Trémorin. "However, to the point. The time has come for me to give you my reasons for telling you why I wished to know everything about this man, and how he might have behaved towards Aurélie. I told you just now that before marrying Montauron, who is a most worthy man, Mademoiselle de Louvigné was so carelessly cared for by her cousin, Madame de Morvieux, that trouble arose from that relative's negligence. If Aurélie was suitably married, she has me to thank for it, for the crazy-headed old woman who had charge of her did nothing but compromise her."

Savinien mutely wondered how far his uncle's confidential communications would go, and what was the true extent of his knowledge respecting this delicate affair.

"She took Aurélie," continued uncle Trémorin, "into cosmopolitan society which, to her, was delightful, for she had been very fond of pleasure when young, and still retained the same tastes. This society was a kind of gilded and elegant 'Bohemia' of all nations, in which there were numbers of people who for a time made a vast show, but who often vanished from Paris, leaving debts behind them. Like comets, they came and went."

"And their coming was a bad omen," remarked Savinien.

"True. But to return to Aurélie. You see that at thirty-three Madame Montauron is still handsome. Now, ten years ago she was admirably beautiful. I have never seen any woman in my life so perfectly lovely. She had rare intelligence and an excellent heart. She was, in a word, a perfect creature, and you can easily believe that she did not lack admirers when she made her appearance in society. She had little or no fortune, as I told you before; but being of so noble a family, I had every reason to think that she would make a very desirable marriage. Unfortunately, I was not living in Paris at the time, and was detained at Plouër by interests of all sorts, so that I could not watch over my old friend's daughter. In the hands of her cousin, the dowager, she ended by falling into a veritable wasp's nest. The so-called 'distinguished' foreigners

who surrounded her kept off men of serious intentions, and one of these birds of ill-omen made the fiercest love to her."

"Was it this Swede?" asked the viscount, although he already knew so well.

"Yes," replied M. de Trémorin, "and what is worse, she fell in love with him. How Mademoiselle de Louvigné can have been pleased with this northern Mephistopheles must ever remain a mystery. I have never been able to understand it, and she has never been able to account for her own feelings towards him. I am forced to believe that it was a kind of spell which this comic-opera brigand exercised over her. He has an air which sentimentalists call 'fatal,' and of which even intelligent women sometimes feel the charm. The matter went on, however, and when Aurélie's feather-headed cousin cried 'Fire!' the house was already half burned down. In other words, when she made up her mind to let me know what was going on, the Swede had made a plot to run off with Aurélie, and she was being very much talked about. I at once came to Paris, and I did my best to repair the mischief, which most fortunately was not irreparable. There had been a talk, but no open scandal, and these things sometimes occur without important consequences in Parisian life. My first thought was to call upon the Scandinavian to repair his light conduct by marrying Mademoiselle de Louvigné. He had a great deal of money, from which circumstance I concluded that he was a man of established wealth. I thought, therefore, that Aurélie might do a worse thing than marry him, under the circumstances. I went to Count Aparanda, and put the matter plainly to him."

"He knows you, then?"

"Perfectly well, and I'll wager that, had he seen me near the kiosk when he was playing the bully, he would have vanished in the twinkling of an eye, for he does not care to be where I am."

"I presume that you treated him rather roughly in former times?" insinuated Savinien, who was bent upon thoroughly pumping his uncle.

"I treated him as he deserved! Would you believe it, that this fellow, after trying various pretexts as an excuse for not marrying Aurélie, ended by confessing that he had a wife in his own country?"

"The miserable scoundrel!"

"I applied that flattering epithet to him myself on that occasion, and added others equally complimentary, but I then made a discovery which influenced my feelings in the matter; I discovered that this man, whose attentions had compromised Aurélie so seriously for the time being, was an absolute coward."

"I, also, have found that out."

"Have you, indeed? Then you have had dealings with him yourself?" exclaimed the baron, somewhat startled.

"Yes, on account of his rudeness one day in the Bois de Boulogne. I was riding with my cousin Adhémar and talking with Mademoiselle Fourcas, whom we had met, and who was also riding, when this man passed by with the same woman whom he brought with him to the fair. He bowed to me and I turned away my head——"

"I see! he submitted to your cutting him dead."

"Worse than that! He informed me that he was going to send his seconds to me, but they have never been sent."

"Of course not! I tell you that he is the most paltry coward in existence. But to resume: I satisfied myself that he was indeed a married

man. I could not, therefore, compel him to marry Aurélie, but I did not, for all that, give up my resolution to save her. I questioned her closely, and I believe that she told me frankly all there was to tell. The evil was not so great as it might have been. She had saved herself in time."

Savinien again experienced a feeling of satisfaction; for, as he had always supposed, it was evident that M. de Trémorin had not wantonly deceived an honourable man by leading him to marry a young girl who had lost her virtue. He had, it seemed, believed Aurélie to have been imprudent—but not guilty. Again, Savinien thought how differently Madame Montauron had told her story to him in order to lead him to lend her his help in the desperate position in which she had found herself in connection both with her husband and with Aparanda.

"I took energetic measures," resumed the baron. "I induced Madame de Morvieux to take a trip to Italy with Mademoiselle de Louvigné. In Paris everything is soon forgotten, and a long absence was the best remedy to apply to such a case. Besides, I signified to this cowardly miscreant that he must leave France under penalty of a public chastisement, and that if he ever undertook to set eyes again on the imprudent girl whom he had injured, I would deal with him unsparingly. At this, much alarmed, the valiant knight decamped without demur, and I heard no more of him. Aurélie remained an entire year on the other side of the Alps, and when she returned home her acquaintance with him had been forgotten. I obliged her cousin to reside outside Paris, and she took up her abode in the environs for a time. They lived at Ville d'Avray, and it was there that I took Monsieur Montauron to see them. He had seen Aurélie a number of times before she had left Paris, and had fallen desperately in love with her, although he was not personally acquainted with her. He knew, however, that I was a friend of the family, and he begged me to give him a regular introduction. I, knowing what an excellent man he was, and how desirable a husband, no less on account of his moral worth than on that of his wealth, did not refuse. I need not tell you that I took good care to tell him that Mademoiselle de Louvigné had already loved, but that, finding her affection to be ill bestowed, she had fled from the man in question, and had returned to France with her heart healed. Montauron had heard something of the affair, and had, I believe, made some inquiries about it. He thanked me for my frankness, and assured me that he did not consider Mademoiselle de Louvigné responsible for the impertinence of a foreigner, who had seen fit to boast of her love, when, in reality, she had only a little giddiness to reproach herself with. I have always supposed that he spoke about all this to Aurélie herself, and that they came to a clear understanding concerning it. In a word, they married, and although they had no children at all, instead of having, as fairy tales set forth, 'a great many,' at all events they were happy. I mean that they have been so until now, as far as I can judge, for I have seen Montauron only at rare intervals, and have never seen his wife during the twelve years which have elapsed since their marriage. Am I wrong? Is the peace of the household now threatened? I begin to fear that it is so, since this man Aparanda has reappeared. I must find out all about this matter, and you must help me to do so."

"I!"

"Yes, you. You know the scoundrel who may bring trouble into my friend's happy home. You must know where he lives, or can find out."

"I believe that he lives at the Grand Hôtel."

"I will find him, then, and compel him to leave Paris within twenty-four hours. He will obey me. I'll answer for it, and Madame Montauron will be grateful to me for ridding her of this detestable ghost, who has arisen, as it were, from the grave of the past."

This declaration of war against the Swede greatly troubled Viscount d'Amaulis. He had his plan for a campaign which did not agree with his uncle's, and the interference of M. de Trémorin was premature and inopportune. He even feared that it would lead to a catastrophe. Abruptly attacked by this old antagonist, Count Aparanda was quite capable of disappearing for good without restoring the child. His disappearance would curtail all negotiations, and plunge Madame Montauron into the depths of despair.

It would have been easy to have led the baron to abandon a plan which he had made *ex abrupto*. His nephew need only have told him all he knew concerning the banker's wife. The baron, fully informed, would then renounce his warlike intentions, no doubt. But how could Savinien reveal him the truth which he was so utterly ignorant of, as he had not the slightest knowledge of the existence of any daughter, the offspring of the culpable weakness of Aurelie de Louvigne? Had he possessed such knowledge he could never have initiated the marriage of his friend's daughter with M. Montauron.

Besides, Savinien had no right to betray the secret confided to him by an unhappy and unfortunate woman, and to force her to blush before her father's friend. At all events he could reveal nothing without consulting Madame Montauron herself.

"Don't you think," said he, "that it would be better to see Madame Montauron before taking any steps whatever, especially aggressive ones?"

"Why should I do so?" replied M. de Trémorin. "It is evident that I should be rendering her a great service by freeing her from this scamp. Since his return she must be in mortal anguish. She would thank me for sending him out of the way."

"I do not doubt that, but I think that Madame Montauron particularly dreads a scandal which might injure her reputation and destroy her peace of mind. This man seems to have come to Paris with hostile intentions. His appearance at the charity fair was a premeditated insult. He showed himself there with a bold and defiant woman in order to warn Madame Montauron that he would neglect no opportunity of being obnoxious to her, or of injuring her."

"With what motive?"

"Because of his wicked nature, in the first place, and secondly, he perhaps means to try to extort money from her; for, although he has won coin at cards, he is said to be, in point of fact, a ruined man. It is, therefore, better not to urge him to extremities, as the result could only be his revenging himself upon Madame Montauron."

"What harm can he do her, after all? His former attentions to her are an old story now, and if he should relate it, even if he cried it through the streets, no one would listen to him. During these twelve years Madame Montauron has never given any cause for scandal, while this Aparanda has become a complete adventurer. The game would not be an equal one, and the Swede won't care to play it."

"Openly, no; but he may make use of such means as such men use.

He may spread outrageous reports or write anonymous letters to the husband, for instance."

"I had not thought of that."

"What would happen if this miserable wretch made Monsieur Montauron believe that his wife had been his mistress?"

"The first thing that would happen would be that Montauron would kill him."

"No; for Aparanda would certainly take good care not to sign any such denunciation. I admit that Monsieur Montauron might not believe it; but calumny always leaves a stain, and if Monsieur Montauron is at all inclined to be jealous——"

"Which he is, or was, I admit. He married Aurélie de Louvigné with all eagerness because he loved her, and because I endorsed her. Still, I think he has always felt a certain mistrust. Montauron is a peculiar sort of man, very frank, very upright, and, like all people who are absolutely wrapped up in business, it is necessary to his happiness that he should be perfectly secure as to his wife. He had faith in me and accepted the wife I offered him, a young girl whom he adored. She has never, that I know of, given him the smallest cause for suspicion, but if his suspicions should once be aroused, he would do anything whatever to clear up his doubts because his very being would be at stake. No man could be director of the Provincial bank and at the same time mount guard over his wife."

"That is true; and don't you think, uncle, that if his peace was disturbed he would blame you for it?"

"That would be a most unjust thing for him to do!" exclaimed the baron, throwing away his almost finished cigar. "If he should take it into his head to revert to the share I had in bringing about his marriage I would soon answer him. But between ourselves, I should greatly prefer to avoid all this, for I like the banker as much as I dislike the Swede. Still, I cannot sit with my arms crossed when this rascally foreigner is apparently threatening Aurélie de Louvigné, the daughter of a man who was my schoolmate and my most intimate friend! I must do something the deuce take it!"

"I think as you do, uncle; but Madame Montauron is the person most interested in this matter, and I return to my first idea. It seems to me that before acting you would do right to consult her."

"Good! Here are you taking upon yourself to give me advice! The world must be upside down! But perhaps you are right, after all. I will see Aurélie and speak to her about it," said M. de Trémorin.

Savinien could scarcely conceal his satisfaction at this resolution on his uncle's part. It was not without a motive that he had endeavoured to bring about this determination. He thought that Madame Montauron would be much better protected by Baron de Trémorin than by Viscount d'Amaulis. The part of protector naturally reverted to his uncle, since the latter was responsible for the marriage, and he had a perfect right to hand the matter over to him. He hoped, besides, that this would lead to a full confession from Madame Montauron to M. de Trémorin, who could not then refuse to take the part of the unhappy victim of the dastardly Swede.

"How do you yourself get on with Madame Montauron?" suddenly asked the baron.

"She received me very cordially."

"But you only saw her before company, and she told you nothing of any domestic troubles?"

"It would have been very strange if she had." As Viscount d'Amaulis thus replied, he could not avoid remembering the many extraordinary events which had led to confidence being placed in him, although but twenty-four years old, when chance had thrown him in the way of the banker's wife.

"Now that we have talked fully of this matter," said the baron, "I will set you free, my dear nephew, till to-morrow."

"To-morrow is a long way off, my dear uncle."

"Bah! You can get on very well for twenty-four hours. I cannot take you to pay calls with Yvonne, because it would look as though I had accepted you as a son-in-law, which I have not yet done."

"You insist upon putting me to a further test, and I consent; but I have no doubt as to the result, so far as I am concerned."

"I have, however, if you haven't. But come to breakfast to-morrow. My time is all taken up to-day. Madame de Loudinières will undoubtedly keep us to dinner. I am just now going to the Provincial Bank, where I have a business appointment with Montauron, which I must attend to before I make my calls."

"Is it at his office?"

"Of course it is. Montauron doesn't habitually receive persons who have business with him in the courtyard. It will take us a full hour to go over our accounts. I so seldom come to Paris, that I must profit by this opportunity to find out how I stand in money matters. Montauron told me that we should not be disturbed this morning on any pretence whatever."

Savinien was already standing and about to take his leave. He promptly determined to profit by this opportunity to try and recover the casket; and he firmly hoped that M. Montauron, shut up with his uncle in the office on the first-floor, would not come to surprise him in the depths of the vaults below.

VI.

ALTHOUGH the office in which M. Bouret had received Viscount d'Amaulis when he first called at the Provincial Bank was richly furnished, it could not compare with the large and superbly furnished apartment occupied by the director when he wished to give an audience to any distinguished shareholders, or had occasion to preside over the meetings of the board of which he was the chairman. These occasions seldom occurred, however, and Montauron usually attended to the greater part of his business without leaving his own house.

However, for a fortnight past, he had changed his habits entirely. To the great annoyance of his lieutenant, who liked to play the part of commander-in-chief, Montauron now made his appearance every morning as soon as the bank opened, and did not go off till the shutters were put up.

He neglected all the great operations which are transacted between those standing high in the financial world, and was not seen on 'Change, or out of doors in the company of other bankers. He had not even made his appearance at the great fair till all the people in his employ had gone off,

and the bank had been closed for the day. Bouret himself could not understand his behaviour, and had received so abrupt an answer on speaking to him with reference to it, that he had no further desire to repeat his questions as to why it was that Montauron had suddenly become so close in his attention to business at the bank itself.

At about one o'clock that afternoon M. de Trémorin called. Montauron had given orders that he should not be disturbed, and was awaiting him in his office. They spent a long time in looking over accounts, and twenty minutes at least elapsed in the laborious examination of papers and books. The business came to an end at last, however; the baron was quick of comprehension, and had a good head for figures.

"I am delighted, my dear friend," said he, after a final verification, the result of which was entirely satisfactory. "I cannot thank you too heartily for having managed my capital so well, and it only remains for me to ask you to continue turning it to account."

"Until Mademoiselle de Trémorin's wedding-day," said M. Montauron pleasantly.

"Even longer, my friend. Besides, we haven't come to that day yet. Meantime I rely upon your discretion, as heretofore; I don't wish that any one should know how much capital I own."

"You may be at ease on that point; a banker, like a physician, knows how to keep the secrets of his business."

"If you were questioned as to my financial situation, I would be greatly obliged to you if you would refer every one to my lawyer at Plouër."

"I understand. You wish that it should be believed that you own some land and nothing more."

"You understand the matter perfectly. My wishes apply to one and all. If, for instance, my nephew should question you, you can reply as you do to every one else."

"Oh, Monsieur d'Amaulis won't do so. He is far too well bred to ask questions."

"I think that he is so. But his stay in Paris has somewhat changed him. Since we are speaking of him, what do you think of his character and what kind of a man do you fancy he will turn out to be?"

"You somewhat embarrass me. I don't know him well enough to say."

"You know that he has been doing some very foolish things here."

"They were very excusable, and have had no bad consequences. It was not a bad thing to make a hundred thousand francs on 'Change."

"Yes, it was, at the beginning of a young man's career. It needs no more to start him on a bad road. Besides, he lost that money at cards," said the baron.

"I was not aware of that," remarked the financier. "You surprise me greatly. I thought that he had given way to a passing temptation before and would not play a second time."

"But he did so. He was made a member of some sort of gambling-den called a club. He allowed himself to be taken to the house of a woman whose rooms are used for gambling purposes, and baccarat swept away all the money he had made by speculation."

"The mischief it did! That accounts for his exhausting his account here in a few days, after scarcely touching it at first."

"Savinien is a fine young man, but he is weak, and this defect may bring him into difficulty. I am anxious that he should marry and settle down."

"That is very easy, it appears to me," replied the banker, with emphasis.

"It would be so if I consented to give him my daughter. But his late ourse does not reassure me as to his future. If I thought that he had a iance of being accepted by the charming heiress whom you pointed out me, I would urge him to court her."

"Ah! my dear baron, I did not imagine that you would speak in this ay to me. I thought that you had other views for him."

"So I had, but my ideas have changed since I came here."

"Mine have changed in another way since I have seen Mademoiselle e Trémorin. You spoke of her in your letters as almost a child. I did ot suppose that she was of marriageable age, and, in accordance with y wife's idea, I made it a point to introduce your nephew to Mademoiselle ourcas. I thought yesterday, however, that Mademoiselle de Trémorin ad formed an attachment for her cousin, and he for her, and that you did ot disapprove of it, and I concluded that it would be useless to think marrying the viscount to the heiress."

"You were wrong, my dear Montauron," said the baron, shaking his ead. "Savinien ought to esteem himself very fortunate in attracting the ttention of so wealthy a girl. I should be grateful to you if you would elp on the match."

"I am afraid that it is too late."

"Why? Has Mademoiselle Fourcas heard of his acts of folly?"

"No, but she was present when you brought Monsieur d'Amaulis to ie kiosk."

"And she saw that young lady, my daughter, fling herself into his rms? Did this display of affection towards a cousin shock the heiress's erves?"

"Didn't you see her face?"

"No. I was talking to Madame Montauron."

"Well, she turned extremely pale, and was so overcome that she was bliged to leave soon afterwards, saying that she was not well."

"That is true. I remember it now. She is jealous, then? That is a ood sign, and shows that my flighty nephew has not lost his chance with er."

"Perhaps so, but for myself I don't think that there is much chance ft. My wife thought that this marriage might take place before Made- oiselle Fourcas saw Mademoiselle de Trémorin, but she does not think now."

"There are other chances for him. It is for Savinien to make a esirable match. I myself will find a husband for Yvonne, and I came to aris with that intention. You know, my friend, that I am lucky as a atch-maker."

This allusion to the past made Montauron start, but he did not speak word, and M. de Trémorin resumed, with an easy air: "Speaking of our marriage, which I helped to bring about, it must be confessed that range things happen to us in this life. The first time that I set foot in our house since you married Aurélie, I come upon a personage who used occupy our thoughts to a great extent twelve years ago, and whom we d not since met until now."

"Who may that be?" stammered the banker, changing colour.

"Good heavens! don't you know? The cavalier of that woman who ade such a scene at the kiosk where Madame Montauron and Made- oiselle Fourcas were selling cigars. I am very sorry that I wasn't there,

and if, when you told me about the occurrence, you had said that it was the Swede whom I took to task in so unsparing a manner in former times. I should have gone after him to renew the tongue-lashing which I gave him in the year 1869. This time, I would have cut off his ears besides."

"You would have done wrong, then! I saw him, and I took good care not to pick a quarrel with him. Out of consideration for my wife, I did not wish to stir up forgotten things."

"I understand that, but she must have been greatly annoyed by his reappearance, and I should be very glad to make him leave Paris once more and retire to foreign parts."

"I should think that it would be better to dismiss this man altogether from your mind," replied M. Montauron coldly. "I intentionally refrained from speaking of him to you yesterday. Who told you that it was he who accompanied the girl?"

"My nephew."

"What! does Monsieur d'Amaulis know him?'

"Certainly; they belong to the same club."

The banker turned pale and looked down without replying. He was thinking of the casket, the withdrawal of which he had been for two weeks endeavouring to prevent, and the information now derived from M. de Trémorin filled his mind with many fresh conjectures respecting it.

"That is not everything," resumed the baron. "My nephew also knows the girl whom this Aparanda accompanied to your fair. It was at her house that he lost the money he had won on 'Change."

"I knew that he was acquainted with her," replied M. Montauron absently. "My wife told me that this woman addresssed Monsieur d'Amaulis in a familiar manner; but I did not know that he had played cards at her house. That was a very great mistake on his part."

"What will you say when I tell you that he played with Count Aparanda, who won all his money from him? Isn't it a blunder to play with a man of bad character with whom nobody will have anything to do and be plundered by him? Am I not a thousand times right in holding D'Amaulis off as a suitor for my daughter's hand?"

"If he is intimate with this foreigner, you are certainly not wrong in doing so," replied the banker, who was following the thread of his own conjectures.

"No, he isn't intimate with him. That would be too outrageous. On the contrary, they don't speak to one another, but it was even going too far to spend one or two evenings in such company as that of this scoundrel."

"Ah! they don't speak to one another?" replied Montauron, thoughtfully.

"Savinien recently cut him dead. It was not my nephew's fault if a duel did not result."

"But there has been some connection between them," insisted Aurélie's husband, looking up.

"None but a formal one, I hope, for the honour of the name of Amaulis."

"Where can they have met?"

"At this so-called 'club,' most likely, a club with a name I don't remember, but where everybody can get in. Savinien was introduced there by a certain George Fougeray, whom I suspect doesn't belong to very select society."

"He carries on risky speculations at the Bourse and elsewhere. He

o fit companion for Monsieur d'Amaulis. I told the viscount all about
ie moral character of his friend."

"His friend? This Fougeray isn't my nephew's friend. There is
othing more than the recollection of their school-days to make them
quainted. But let us go back to that bird of ill-omen who has turned
p again after twelve years' absence. What do you think of his unlooked-
r return?"

"I don't think anything about it whatever," replied M. Montauron,
ith some embarrassment.

"Come, now, my dear friend," began the baron, earnestly, "we have
nown each other a long time, and can certainly speak to each other
ithout disguise. It is impossible that since your marriage you should
ever have thought of this paltry scamp who so nearly compromised
urélie before she became your wife."

"I have not forgotten him, but I have never made any inquiries
bout him," said M. Montauron, sullenly.

"I understand that, and I am sure that Madame Montauron has never
ought of him except with anger. I hoped, for my own part, that he had
one to some far-off country where adventurers resort. But here he is
gain, and this specimen of his behaviour yesterday is not calculated to
assure us as to his intentions."

"You believe, then, that he is disposed to interfere with my domestic
eace?"

"He could not disturb that, I'm sure, but he is capable of anything—
r example, of slandering your wife."

"With what motive?"

"In order to extort money from her to make him hold his tongue."

"Hold his tongue! What can he have to say?"

"Nothing of any consequence, of course not, but he may invent
ings——"

"Madame Montauron's character is above his attacks."

"Certainly, but it would be none the less painful should he set stories
oot respecting her."

"Should any such stories come to my ears, I should know how to put
n end to them."

"It would be better to prevent them by signifying to this man that if he
entures to articulate your name he will have to deal with me. I have been
inking of this ever since my nephew related yesterday's scene to me."

"Allow me to say," replied Montauron, gravely, "that your inter-
rence in this matter would be incomprehensible. It is for me to defend
y own honour."

"Very well, my dear friend," replied M. de Trémorin. "I thought,
owever, that I had the right to interest myself in what concerned the
aughter of my old friend, Monsieur de Louvigné; but, as you see things
a different light, let us say no more on the matter."

"On the contrary, I have something to say. Allow me also to ask you
explain a fact which has often surprised me. You have been several
mes in Paris since my marriage, and have never once called on Madame
Iontauron."

"Can you suppose that I avoided doing so?"

"Yes; and I have wondered why."

"Have you discovered any reason for it?" asked the baron, in a tone
irony.

"I don't know. I have sometimes thought that you regretted having married us."

"In other words, you suspect me of having deceived you when I guaranteed the virtue of Mademoiselle de Louvigné. You have a very bad opinion of me, my dear friend, and you should remember that while I approved of your wish to marry Aurélie, I did not hide anything from you that I knew. I told you everything, perhaps even more than there was to tell, for I attached undue importance to a passing fancy. I have, therefore, nothing to reproach myself with. As for my failure to call, it had no other reason than want of time. I never have spent more than forty-eight hours in Paris at a time, and I did not wish to spend more, as my presence at Plouër was indispensable. I was engaged in farming land which I only made up my mind a month ago to let. The proof that I had no other reason is, that I sent my nephew to Madame Montauron, and that this time, as now I expect to stay in Paris for some weeks, my first visit was to her, and besides, if this explanation is not all sufficient, I will add, that I took my daughter, also, to visit her." All this was said in a resolute and dignified manner which impressed the banker greatly.

There was a moment's silence. The Breton nobleman looked fixedly at the banker, and tried to read his feelings in his face.

"My dear Montauron," he resumed at last, "I do not feel any grudge against you, but I pity you from the bottom of my heart; for I have discovered that you are suffering from a malady which causes much pain, and which is hard to cure. You are jealous, my poor friend, and jealous of the past, which is still worse."

"It is true!" exclaimed the unhappy man. "Why should I conceal it from you? After twelve years of cloudless happiness, I have for a month past lived in horrible torments."

"Good heavens! you terrify me! For a month past, you say? What can have happened? What catastrophe has occurred? Is it the return of this detestable Aparanda?"

"No. I did not know until yesterday that he *had* returned. Still, it is possible that this man may be the cause of my misfortune," said Montauron in a hesitating manner.

"Then you, yourself, are not certain as to what has happened?" asked the baron in surprise.

"You will think me a madman, and perhaps I am, indeed, mad. But I don't know who is to blame in all this. Inexplicable things take place around me. I have suspicions which I cannot verify. I mistrust my wife, and I dare not accuse her to her face. I am leading a life of anguish. It would be a million times better to be sure than thus in doubt. I should kill the man who is to blame, or he would kill me, and that would end it."

"But who in the name of all that is rational can it be? What do your suspicions rest upon? What are the facts?"

"There are facts which I cannot explain to myself."

"May I be hanged or guillotined if I can make out what you possibly mean by all this," said M. de Trémorin. "Tell me something of a precise nature."

"You might assist me in finding out something of that kind."

"How?"

"By answering the questions I will ask you, and answering them frankly;

"The word 'frankly' means that you doubt my frankness, but never
ind that. Go on!"

"Well, then, I wish to know whether Monsieur Savinien d'Amaulis
as any valuable objects belonging to him."

"My nephew! What has he got to do with all this, great heavens!
What have his possessions to do with you? Don't you know as well as I
o what he owns and what he doesn't? I have told you twenty times that
e had six thousand francs a year from his land, and all that I have not
xpended for his education and support has been put into your banking
usiness. There is a large sum to his credit, of which, however, he knows
othing."

"I am aware of that, but I ask you whether he may not have laid up
ioney in some way or other, money which he may have brought to Paris."

"Laid up money! Out of what? At Plouer he never had any money
o dispose of. There is no occasion for spending-money in that place.
avinien came here with his letter of credit and some fifteen louis."

"In a casket?"

"A casket! What need would there be of a casket for three hundred
rancs? What can you be thinking of?" asked M. de Trémorin, who did
ot try to conceal his amazement.

"I am greatly obliged to you for telling me this, my dear baron," was
ie reply; "but I will now ask another and more confidential question."

"About Savinien?"

"Yes. I will take the liberty of asking you whether he has ever
orresponded with any woman?"

"Come now, Montauron," exclaimed M. de Trémorin. "will you be
ind enough to tell me what you mean by these strange questions?" and
ie baron rose impatiently.

Montauron, instead of replying, eagerly seized the tube of a telephone
hich had just given a warning ring, and, applying his lips to the orifice,
aid: "I am here; is the person in the vaults?"

The reply was not long in coming, but it only reached the ear of
I. Montauron, who was holding the tube. The baron saw that the
anker at once changed countenance,

"What is the matter?" asked he. "Is your stock going down? or
the Spanish Mobilier going up?"

"Nothing of the kind." replied the banker; "but I am sent for, and
ust go down stairs at once."

"Why don't you let the person come here? It seems to me that the
aster oughtn't to be disturbed by the man."

"It is something very particular, and I am obliged to leave you."

"You shall not leave me till you explain yourself more clearly. I
ish to know what you mean by your strange questions about Savinien."

"I will tell you; but I must go away for a few moments, and if you
ill remain here I will return to you."

"No, no! I want an immediate and clear explanation. Why do you
k me whether my nephew ever kept up an amorous correspondence,
id whether he had saved up any money?"

"On account of a casket in which he may have placed some letters or
me money."

"There you are again with your casket! Speak in an intelligible
anner, my friend, or I shall begin to think that you are making fun of
e," testily said M. de Trémorin.

"Making fun of you! I have no wish to do that, I swear to you! Give me a quarter of an hour, and I will tell you everything," rejoined Montauron,

"Tell me everything now!"

"I haven't the time, and besides, I cannot tell you anything positive until I have seen a person who is down stairs now."

Montauron, who had not let go of the india-rubber tube, again applied his lips to the orifice, and said to the clerk at the desk on the ground floor: "I am coming."

"You had better add 'ask him to wait,'" said M. de Trémorin, placing himself in such a position as to prevent the banker from leaving the room.

"You hardly mean to prevent me leaving my office, I presume!" exclaimed the banker, in a tone of great anger.

"I mean to know why you busy yourself so much about the conduct of Viscount d'Amaulis. I am his uncle, and I represent him. I do what he would do if he were here."

"You don't know how matters stand."

"Tell me, then!"

"It would take too long. For mercy's sake, baron, do not detain me! My peace, my honour are at stake!"

"This is perfectly incredible! Any one would think that your wife was concerned in all this, that you were talking about her," said the baron.

"She is concerned in it. I am talking of her."

"Do you mean to say that you believe Savinien to be her lover?"

"I don't know, and I want to find out."

"My dear friend, jealousy has upset your mind. Savinien never beheld Madame Montauron until a month ago. A few moments since you said that you believed him to be madly in love with his cousin. So be reasonable and admit that your suspicions are absurd."

"That may be, but let me satisfy myself."

"How? By talking to a clerk who has called you through a tube? But this is insanity itself," said the old nobleman.

"Do you believe me to be capable of telling a falsehood?"

"Certainly not."

"I swear to you that at this moment my future happiness is at stake. If I lose this opportunity of clearing up a doubt which is killing me, I shall have no resource but death; and I would rather die than live as I am now living. In the name of all you hold dear, in the name of our old friendship, let me go!"

This was said in such a tone that M. de Trémorin could not offer any resistance. Besides, he felt how ridiculous his position would become if he attempted any longer to prevent the director of the Provincial Bank from leaving his office, and he did not care to come to an actual hand to hand struggle with the over-excited financier, who, besides, would only have had to ring a bell to summon half a dozen clerks to his help.

"I should be very sorry for you to die," he answered, turning the matter into a jest. "Go, my dear friend, go! But don't ask me to wait for you here. Our accounts have been looked over, and I rely upon your clearing up this matter to my satisfaction this evening or to-morrow."

"I promise to do so," said Montauron, whose hand was already on the knob of an inner door which communicated with a staircase leading to the vaults.

"Good-bye, then, till I see you again, and don't cudgel your brains about Savinien. I'll risk my head that he is perfectly innocent."

The banker vanished behind the door like a conspirator in a melodrama, and M. de Trémorin, left to himself, went off shrugging his shoulders as he opened the other door which communicated with the main staircase.

"May the fiend fly away with me," said he to himself, as he went down two or three steps at a time, "if I can understand what the worthy fellow means with his talk about caskets, and love-letters, and savings accumulated by my nephew! There is evidently something in it all, however. Aparanda has been meddling. But how has my nephew become involved in all these ugly matters? I must question him thoroughly, and as soon as possible, for Montauron is so awfully excited that he may do something rash. Where am I to find Savinien, now that I have sent him about his business until to-morrow? That was a bad idea, and I have a great mind to go to his rooms and see if he is there. But Yvonne is waiting for me. Poor Yvonne! if she only knew what her cousin is accused of! I shall say nothing, not a word, however, for I have promised not to try to influence her in any way."

While the baron reflected he reached the courtyard open to the public. There was a crowd there as usual, and it was necessary to thread one's way through the group of people in order to reach the exit on the Avenue de l'Opéra. While M. de Trémorin was trying his utmost to get through the busy mob, he was rudely jostled by some one who was walking in the same direction, but much faster than himself. And, as patience was not his greatest quality, he began to apostrophise this hurried individual, and exclaimed: "Take care! what the mischief are you doing?"

On hearing this, several people turned their heads, but the man who had jostled him kept on his way without attempting to apologise. The baron, angered by this rudeness, was about to repeat his words, and even to emphasise them, when, on looking at the individual who was running on ahead, he thought that he recognised his nephew.

"That is strange," said he, muttering to himself. "That man looks like my nephew. It is he! Where has he come from, and what is he running for, as if he had an armed policeman after him? I will find this out."

Striding along, and in his turn jostling everybody whom he found in his way, the uncle now reached the threshold of the main door at the very moment when the man whom he was pursuing darted with great rapidity on to the side walk, and went off in the direction of the boulevard.

"Savinien!" exclaimed M. de Trémorin, in a clear and sonorous voice, that of a naval officer accustomed to command.

Viscount d'Amaulis turned as he heard him, but did not stop. He made a sign which the baron failed to understand, and set off at a full run without caring who was after him.

"That is a little too much!" grumbled the baron; "the young scamp is mocking me, but he shan't escape." And, forgetting his dignity as an uncle, he set off after the fugitive, who had all the advantage in the race.

At the first corner Savinien turned abruptly and disappeared. But M. de Trémorin did not give up the pursuit. He went on even faster, and, coming to the corner, he again caught sight of the object of his arduous chase, and continued to pursue him at the same rate all along the Rue d'Antin. He again called out, and this time with unlooked-for effect, for Viscount d'Amaulis darted under a door-way and did not reappear.

"Ah! the rascal!" said the old nobleman, stopping to draw breath. "He is under cover, but if he thinks that he has escaped me he is mistaken. I would rather mount guard before the house where he has run to earth until to-morrow morning! But I'll do better than that. I'll question the doorkeeper, who will tell me where he has gone."

It was time for the chase to come to an end. The baron had never been a foot soldier, and could only hunt on horseback. He was utterly exhausted, and panting with anger as well as fatigue.

"Upon my word of honour!" he muttered, as he wiped his forehead, "any one might think that Savinien had been robbing the Provincial Bank. I thought the young scamp had a box or a bag in his hand, and that reminds me of Montauron's jargon about a—— But no!—it is too absurd, an Amaulis wouldn't steal!" As the baron muttered these words, he reached the doorway which Savinien had entered. This doorway was that of a well kept house. Carriages could not enter by it, but it led to a vestibule with a marble pavement and a stucco ceiling. Beyond was a staircase, somewhat wide, and well waxed. On the right was the doorkeeper's room, which was almost as handsome as the drawing-room of a country house. All the distinctive signs by which the abodes of middle-class citizens are recognisable in Paris, were to be found here. People who keep carriages do not live in such houses, nor do the poor. They are only suited to persons in comfortable circumstances but not wealthy.

M. de Trémorin took in all this at a glance, for he was much more of a Parisian than he looked, but he saw nothing of Viscount d'Amaulis. Savinien had, no doubt, gone to see some one in the house, some one with whom he was acquainted, and as he was evidently trying to avoid his uncle, he might perhaps remain for hours. The baron was not disposed to wait for him until it pleased him to come down again, and so he had recourse at once to strong measures. He went into the doorkeeper's room, where he found a very stylish-looking young lady, who was reading a printed play, of the kind sold by Tresse, the theatrical publisher, and who scarcely condescended to raise her eyes as he asked, "Can you tell me what became of that gentleman?"

"What gentleman?" said the doorkeeper's presumptive heiress, disdainfully.

"The one who went in just now, about two minutes ago."

"I was studying my part. I did not see anybody."

"That is impossible. Your door was open, and the gentleman was running like a madman; you must have noticed him."

"Do you suppose that it is my business to spy upon the people who come here?" asked the young person, with a pert look.

"Your business is to watch over the security of the house, I presume. And if you don't look at those who come in, a robber may find his way in here."

"A robber! Are you looking for a robber? Are you a detective?"

"Do I look like one? Take care what you say!"

This was the moment or never to offer a louis to this future queen of the stage, and the baron put his hand into his pocket, just as the repeated noise of a bell, violently pulled, caught his ear.

"The bell is ringing very loudly up there. You must know whose it is."

"It is on the second floor," answered the young person, already in a milder tone, as she saw the baron fumbling for his purse.

"What is the name of the tenant on the second floor?"

"He is a very respectable young gentleman, who does not receive any but respectable people."

"I do not pretend the contrary; but you would greatly oblige me if you would tell me his name," replied M. de Trémorin, holding out a twenty-franc piece.

The talisman produced its effect. The reader rose and approached the gentleman who wished to bribe her at so liberal a rate.

"The gentleman, in question, would have no objection to have his name mentioned," she said, bridling up. "His name is Monsieur Fougeray."

"George Fougeray, the broker!" exclaimed the baron.

"The same. Do you know him?"

"Yes, yes. I do, and the proof of it is that I am going to see him now. You say that he lives on the second floor?"

"The door on the left. But he is not at home."

"No matter," answered M. de Trémorin, throwing the gold piece upon a waiting table which stood within his reach. He then darted from the room to the stairs. He knew now what to think, and did not fear that his nephew would make his escape, for he had made up his mind to get somehow or other into the rooms of this fellow Fougeray, who appeared to be mixed up in all the foolish acts of Viscount d'Amaulis.

The bell rang again. This was a favourable sign. It proved that Savinien was still on the landing, and the baron immediately began to hope that he should be able to catch him in the very act of seeking shelter.

He crept softly up the stairs, and reached the second floor at the very moment when the viscount, quite discouraged, had given up ringing, and was about to come down again.

The uncle and nephew met face to face, and an animated conversation began at once.

"I hold you at last!" exclaimed the angry old nobleman. "and you will be kind enough to explain why you forced me to run after you."

"I could not guess that you were following me," replied the nephew, with vexation.

"Ah! that is a little too much! You saw me perfectly well, and heard me call out to you, for you turned round; but it seems that you wished to avoid me."

"You? Oh no!"

"Who, then? The police?"

Then, as Savinien did not reply, M. de Trémorin resumed vehemently: "I am surprised that you were not arrested as a thief. You came out of the Provincial Bank, and robbers, I presume, sometimes get in there. When they are pursued they don't run any faster than you did."

The viscount hung his head, and persisted in saying nothing.

"Will you speak, or not?" resumed M. de Trémorin. "I want a clear explanation. What did you go to the Provincial Bank for? You cannot say that you went to draw out any money, as your credit is exhausted there. Montauron told me that you had no more money to draw."

"You have just seen him, then?"

"I have just left him. I was coming from his office when you jostled me as I was crossing the courtyard. He had a great deal to say about you."

"What did he say?"

"Ah! you are becoming interested now! Well, if you wish to know, tell me, first of all, where you were coming from when I met you."

"I had been there to ask for information."

"What! are you making fun of me? What business do you ply that necessitates your asking for any information at a bank? You have no money to put into business, and you won't, I presume, undertake to tell me that you have deposited valuables at Montauron's banking-house?"

"I cannot explain myself on this landing," replied Savinien.

"Very well, come with me. I don't care any more than you do to stand like a stork on one leg at Monsieur Fougeray's door."

"You know that he lives here, then?"

"I have just been told so. It cost me a louis to find it out, but I do not regret it, as I have caught you. But enough of this. The Rue du Helder hotel is conveniently near. You can go there with me and confess all about this matter, or I will never see you again as long as I live."

"I will do whatever you wish, uncle, but I prefer to wait a while before leaving this house."

"What do you want to wait for? For your friend Fougeray to appear? Do you intend to allow that gentleman to take part in our conversation?"

"That isn't what I want; but can you tell me whether you left Monsieur Montauron in his office or not?"

"That is a strange question, as strange as your present behaviour, and if I reply to it, it is only because I wish to give you no further excuse. No, I did not leave Monsieur Montauron in his office. Montauron was summoned by the telephone and went down."

"To the vaults?" asked Savinien.

"Yes. How did you know that, if you please?" retorted his uncle, wrathfully,

"I did not know it. I asked you."

"Enough cross-questioning. Let us go."

"Will you allow me to send the doorkeeper for a cab?'

"What for?" cried uncle Trémorin. "Can't you walk, or are you afraid of being stopped in the street? I warn you, my lad, that you are beginning to provoke me by your reservations! If you continue to withhold an explanation from me, I shall seriously begin to believe that you have committed some bad act. You look at this moment like a criminal in presence of a judge. You dare not raise your eyes, you seem to be bending over, you hold your elbows close to your sides, and—Heaven forgive me!—I could almost swear that you have got a bag of money under your coat!"

Savinien started, and the gesture which he involuntarily made displayed an object which he had been hiding to the best of his ability while M. de Trémorin had been questioning him.

"I am not mistaken!" exclaimed his uncle. "You are holding a steel casket, a portable coffer! What does this mean? Where did you get this casket, you scamp?"

"You don't suppose that I stole it, I hope?" replied the nephew.

"I don't know," replied the exasperated baron. "Prove that you haven't, or I——"

He did not finish what he was about to say. Some one was coming up the stairs in haste, and Savinien already blessed this happy diversion, which for the moment averted the necessity of explaining. A few seconds

later George Fougeray appeared on the landing, and immediately recognised M. de Trémorin whom he had formerly known at Rennes. He made haste to salute him, addressing him by his title of baron, and offered his hand to Savinien, who looked very much out of spirits.

"If I had thought that you were coming to see me to-day," said George with a careless air, "I should not have absented myself, especially if I could have guessed that your uncle would do me the honour——"

"You are Monsieur Fougeray, are you not?" interrupted the baron hastily.

"Baron, I am, and I cannot thank you sufficiently for having taken the trouble to——"

"Don't thank me, sir," cried M. de Trémorin. "It is my nephew whom I came here after; and as I have found him I will ask you to admit us into your rooms and leave us to ourselves for a few moments."

"I am at your orders, baron," replied George with some surprise. "There is the smoking-room where you can talk privately, while I write a few letters in my room which is at the other end of the flat."

The old nobleman hesitated for a moment. This proximity annoyed him, but it was difficult to turn M. Fougeray out of his own room, and he wished to settle matters with Savinien.

"Very well, sir," he replied. "Be kind enough to open the door and show us in."

This way of proceeding was not exactly courteous, but M. de Trémorin knew what kind of man he had to deal with, and George Fougeray did not appear to take it amiss. He was too intelligent to refuse to do a favour to a man who might some day be useful to him. In the situation in which he found himself he was altogether disposed to conciliate everybody, and especially a wealthy capitalist. So he opened the door with all alacrity, and ushered the baron into his rooms.

Savinien followed his uncle, still very dejected, and trying to prepare himself for an explanation which he would gladly have avoided.

"Excuse me, sir, for receiving you in this bachelor's hole," said Fougeray, politely. "I am only a new-comer in Paris in the matter of luxury, although I have lived here for years."

"It seems to me that you have done pretty well," replied the baron, glancing at the furniture in an absent manner. "I know very honest people who have worked all their lives, and who would be glad to live as handsomely. It is true that they are not speculators at the Bourse."

This thrust prevented George from making any further attempt at conversation. He thought that M. de Trémorin had heard of the profits realised by his nephew in a certain peculiar speculation, and he feared that the old nobleman, who was a man of strong prejudices, might ask him to explain the part he had played in that matter.

"I will leave you, gentlemen," said he, pushing forward an arm-chair for the baron. "Amaulis knows where the cigars are kept. Act, I beg, exactly as though you were at home. I shall not come in unless you do me the honour to call me."

With this courteous assurance he raised a curtain, which separated the smoking-room from a library, or "working-room"—in which he never worked—then, before going further, he carefully fastened the curtain back, a delicate attention, which was intended to show M. de Trémorin that he might speak without fear of being overheard. Indeed the room in which George shut himself up, after taking this precaution, was separated from

the smoking-room by the entire length of the library, which, as the curtain was raised and the door open, the baron could see was altogether unoccupied.

While these preparations for a formidable interview were being made, Savinien was suffering untold agony. He understood but too well that he would be sharply questioned by his uncle, and that the latter would not be satisfied with evasive answers. How could he tell him the truth, however, without revealing Madame Montauron's secret? M. de Trémorin had no knowledge of this secret. The conversation, which had followed upon the breakfast at the Lion d'Or, had left no doubt in Savinien's mind upon that point. To reveal it now would in his eyes be tantamount to dishonouring a woman for whom he had always felt a warm regard, and whom he still esteemed.

Until now, Savinien had always been able to get out of his difficulties by evasive answers. Nothing showed that he had been taken into confidence by Madame Montauron, still less by Count Aparanda. But his uncle on this occasion would evidently be close in his questioning, and attack him openly. The casket, the accursed casket, was there in his hands, and Savinien would surely be compelled to reveal whence it came. To avert the really painful humiliation of a culpable though penitent woman it was necessary to lie, to invent some story which M. de Trémorin would probably not believe. One can only escape from false situations by sacrifices of principle, when indeed a catastrophe does not occur.

Savinien now placed the steel casket, which he could no longer hide, upon the table, and waited in silence for his uncle to open fire

"Sit down," said M. de Trémorin, coldly, as he ensconced himself in the arm-chair which George Fougeray had offered him before he went into the adjoining room. "We have a great deal to go over, I should say, and these matters can hardly be explained while you remain standing."

Savinien sunk into a chair.

"I now know," pursued the baron, "why you ran so fast, came here, and are afraid to go out again. You were afraid of being followed by Monsieur Montauron, and you are still afraid that you may meet him."

There came a pause, and then the old nobleman added: "I will tell you how I know that this is the case. I was in Montauron's office just now, and he spoke of a casket which he said that you possessed, and which contained either letters or money. I did not understand this, and I was urging him to explain himself, when he left me to go to the vaults. I tried to detain him. I did not succeed, and I was going away very much disturbed in mind and completely puzzled, when I met you, running off as fast as you could. Fortunately, I have caught you, and I find you laden with this casket, which I now see for the first time. I will not insult you by asking you whether you stole it or not, for I could never believe that my nephew could steal anything, and besides I can guess very closely what has happened. You deposited it at the banking-house where you had an account, and have just taken it back. This is perfectly proper, and there is no reason why you should make a mystery of it."

"I do not make a mystery of it," muttered Savinien.

"Because you cannot any longer deny its existence, but you were doing so a moment ago, as you were running away with it. Why were you trying to avoid Montauron? What is there in that mysterious box?"

"Monsieur Montauron, it would seem, has told you," stammered the viscount, whose head was beginning to whirl.

"I beg your pardon, Montauron asked me if you had any money savings, nd I did not understand until afterwards the purport of the question. Now, you have no savings, that is very certain. You brought but a trifling um of money from Plouer, and you admitted this morning that not a opper remained of what you made on 'Change."

"I may have made other money, and——"

"Stop! You are about to say what isn't true, and it is almost as bad o lie as to steal. If this casket is full of gold, open it and prove it to me. When I have seen the contents I will further request you to prove that he money is yours."

"I haven't the key."

"For the good reason that the casket isn't yours. If it were your own should recognise it from having seen it in your room at Plouer, for it is a perfect work of art. You may say that you bought it in Paris. That may be, but I don't believe it, and as for its contents, it is not heavy nough to be filled with gold. It may have bank-notes inside, but I hear, s I shake it, the noise of some light object or other knocking against the ides. I now come to another supposition, which Montauron advanced. He questioned me as to whether you had any intrigue on hand, one of the kind in which letters are written, letters with which a deeply infatuated over is never willing to part. I at once saw that he suspected that you ad deposited your amorous correspondence at his bank."

"You answered him, I hope, that he was mistaken."

"I gave him no answer at all, for the excellent reason that I knew othing about it, and I do not yet know," replied M. de Trémorin, looking teadily at his nephew, and, as Savinien cast down his eyes without replying, the baron resumed: "I naturally suppose that this casket is yours, s you set as though it belonged to you, and I must also consider the eclaration which you have made to me to be true also. 'Monsieur Montauron,' you say to me, 'has told you what the casket contains.' Now, Montauron believes that it contains either money or love-letters. I, myself, lean towards this latter opinion. You declare that I am wrong. Prove it!"

"My entire life is the proof that you are wrong. Don't you know what it has been? I have never been separated from you from my childood up."

"You were three years at Rennes. You were a volunteer for an entire ear, without counting your trips to Dinard and St. Malo."

"At Rennes I was very near you. You saw me every two weeks. My ervice as a volunteer was in a regiment of dragoons garrisoned at Dinan, our leagues from Plouer. When I went to the seaside it was for a week t a time."

"Quite time enough to——"

"Begin a love affair? That may be. But had I been engaged in a erious affair the whole country-side would have rang with it."

"Everybody would have known it, perhaps, excepting me, my wife. nd my daughter."

"I think, on the contrary, that you would have been the first to hear f it. Everything is known in the country. Do you assert that during ne month that I have lived in Paris I have carried on an intrigue, and ne leading to the exchange of love-letters?"

"I assert nothing whatever. I am simply waiting for you to justify ourself by giving me an explanation such as I can accept."

"You know," replied Savinien, whose eyes were full of tears, "that I have a deep attachment for my cousin. How could I love another woman at the same time?"

"That would, indeed, be very base, and since you speak of Yvonne, I declare to you that if you do not completely justify yourself as regards this story about this casket, she shall never become your wife. I do not admit that a shadow of doubt should rest upon the honourability of a son-in-law of mine, and I have a right to exact perfect frankness from you. I even declare that I will make my decision known to my daughter, and will tell her why I dismiss you as a suitor."

"Uncle, you would not do that!" exclaimed Savinien, who turned perceptibly pale."

"I will do it, on my word of honour," firmly replied M. de Trémorin; "if I did not do it I should be wanting in my duty as a father. I cannot suffer my daughter to remain unaware that you—who say you love her—are engaged in an intrigue—an intrigue which I can only qualify as being in every way a most mysterious affair."

"I swear to you that I have nothing whatever to reproach myself with, and that I have never ceased to adore Yvonne."

"Adore! What sort of talk is that? A man does not 'adore' a woman when he is going to marry her. He loves her truly and earnestly, and does not go about paying attentions to other women."

"Then you believe me to be lying? You believe that I have forgotten the vows exchanged between Yvonne and myself?"

"In the first place, I was not aware that any vows had been exchanged, and I think that that young lady, my daughter, ought to have consulted me before promising to do what she cannot do without my permission. At her age a girl has no right to make vows binding her future, and at your age no man can answer for his constancy. You have placed yourself in a position which I am forced to meddle with if only through interest in you. I cannot understand what is hidden in the story respecting this casket; but there is evidently something wrong in the matter, and it seems clear to me that you have set out on a bad road. I wish to stop you on the way, and especially to prevent Yvonne from following you. Mademoiselle de Trémorin cannot become the wife of any man whose life is not as clear as crystal, and you will admit that if you are in good faith."

While the baron spoke he had been stealthily examining his nephew's countenance, and he saw with satisfaction that his words produced a marked effect. Savinien was evidently much disturbed. He did not raise his eyes, and evidently feared to meet the old nobleman's searching look.

"Ah! uncle," said he, "you would not accuse me thus if you knew the facts."

"Great powers! I only ask to know them. For the last ten minutes I have been entreating you to tell them. I don't despair of your being able to justify yourself. Appearances are against you, but a man does not condemn his own nephew on the strength of appearances. Speak! tell me where this casket comes from, what it contains, and let that be the end of the matter."

"Supposing I told you that there is a secret in the affair, which is not mine?"

"I should not be satisfied with an explanation like that, which is no explanation at all."

"The proof that the casket is not mine, that it has merely been entrusted to me, is that I have not even the key of it."

"You told me that before, but it does not help the matter. I am willing to believe you, but be frank! You know what this 'surprise-box' contains?"

"I swear to you upon my honour that it has never been opened in my presence."

"Good! but the person who gave it to you told you what it contained."

"Yes," replied Savinien in a stifled tone.

"That is well!" exclaimed his uncle. "Here is the beginning of the confession. Make it complete. What is the treasure which you have been asked to take care of?"

"If I told you, you would guess everything."

"Very well. You persist in your mysteries. You will gain nothing by it, for I am determined to see the matter to the end. I am going to proceed from the known to the unknown, and you will see at last that you will be forced to confess everything. In the first place, you cannot deny that you have taken the casket away from the vaults where it was deposited."

"No, of course not, but ——"

"I have only to ask the manager of the Provincial Bank when the deposit was made."

"Do not do that!" exclaimed Viscount d'Amaulis, hurriedly.

"This is as it should be!" cried M. de Trémorin. "You are coming to terms. I will help you. You don't want me to speak to Monsieur Montauron about the casket. I have no great difficulty in guessing why."

"What do you mean?"

"That Montauron is interested in the matter. I thought so. When I was in his office, he talked of nothing but Viscount d'Amaulis and a casket, and when one of his clerks summoned him down stairs by telephone he became excited to an extraordinary degree. He wished to go down to the vaults, but I detained him. I did well, for had I let him go, he would have surprised you, casket in hand."

"Great misfortunes would have been the result had he done so."

"Then I cannot regret having withheld the formidable financier. He was not himself at all, and had he met you, might have had recourse to violence."

"It isn't that I feared."

"No, you fear for another, for the woman to whom you intend to return the casket."

Savinien did not reply, but his silence and his dejection spoke plainly enough.

"I know who the lady is," quietly resumed M. de Trémorin.

"You, uncle! Impossible! Unless indeed she——"

"Unless, indeed, she has confided in me! No she has not. She will, I hope, but she has not yet done so. And—not to let you stumble about in denials, which you cannot keep up, I will tell you who she is. Her name is Madame Montauron."

"No! no! I protest that——"

"Protest as much as you please. I am sure that it is she. Montauron in his excitement told me no end of things which I did not wish to know. Thus it was that after asking me a great many questions, the aim of which

I could not comprehend, he ended by confessing that he is jealous of his wife and of you."

"Of me! The man must be mad!"

"So I told him, or about the same thing, but he persisted in what he said. I could not get any rational explanation from him. All that I could find out was that he was waiting for you to come in search of the famous casket. You must have been watched by the clerks who mount guard over the deposits, and but for me, you would not have been able to get away with this coffer. You see, my dear boy, that I know everything, and that it is too late to make mysteries. I don't blame you for being discreet, as a woman is concerned in the case, but the time has come for a clear elucidation. How is it that in a month's time you have become Madame Montauron's confidant? You had no acquaintance whatever with her a month ago. What is the nature of the connection which has arisen between you in so short a time?"

"What! Do you also suppose——"

"I have the right to demand a full explanation," interrupted the baron. "Should you refuse it, my mind will be made up. A gentleman never betrays the secret of a woman's weakness as regards himself. I shall think that you are acting like a gentleman, who, not wishing to confess or lie, remains silent. And I need not add that I shall beg of you to dismiss all thoughts of Yvonne."

"Uncle, you place me in a frightful position."

"No. If, as I hope, you are not Madame Montauron's lover, there is no reason why you should not tell me the facts as they exist. I know Madame Montauron much better than you can know her, since I know her past, as I related it to you this morning at the Lion d'Or. It is probable that if I, instead of Viscount d'Amaulis, had come to Paris, it would have been to me and not to that very young gentleman that she would have confided her sorrows, for it was I whom she chose as her defender formerly, and I am still here to act as such. I shall see her this evening, and it is probable that she will tell me everything. You can therefore speak out. Come, what mission has she given you?"

"I should prefer that she should tell you herself."

"If it concerns Count Aparanda, there is no mystery to be kept up."

"As regards him, no; but Madame Montauron's secret is her own."

"Her secret! What secret? She has no secret that I don't know of. I know very well that she had a flirtation with the Swede, and that letters were exchanged. Are that scoundrel's letters in this casket? Of course not; she would not have asked you to deposit them in the Provincial Bank. It would have been much easier to have burned them; and, now I think of it, what put such a strange idea into your head as to take this casket to a banking-house directed by her husband?"

"When I did so, I did not know the name of the lady who had confided it to me."

"We are going back to mystification, then? I begin to think that you are making fun of me," answered M. de Trémorin, impatiently. "Let us leave this. It does not suit me to continue this conversation. I will tell Madame Montauron what has passed between us, and I shall act according to what she says to me. I have but one more question to ask of you, and I presume that you will not refuse to reply to it. What are you going to do with this casket?"

At this question, which Savinien might have foreseen, he lost his self-

possession. By telling the truth he would gradually have been compelled to confess the existence of the child of Aurélie de Louvigné and Count Aparanda. He felt this danger approaching, and so he remained silent.

"This is going too far!" exclaimed his uncle, rising abruptly. "I renounce the idea of obtaining anything from you, and I beg of you also to renounce all thoughts of your cousin."

"Give me a few days to justify myself!" exclaimed Savinien. "To-morrow I shall, perhaps, be allowed to speak; to-day I cannot say anything."

"Then I shall leave you," replied M. de Trémorin, going towards the door. "You can come to see me when you have made up your mind to explain your conduct." And, without giving his nephew time to add a single word, the angry uncle left the room, and went down the stairs faster than he had climbed them.

Savinien ran to the window, and saw him direct his steps towards the Rue du Helder.

"He is going to join Yvonne," thought the poor lover, "and Heaven only knows what he will say to her about me. No matter! I am glad that I remained firm. When he knows the truth, he will approve of the course I have pursued. It remains with Madame Montauron to tell the facts, and I hope that she will not fail to do so this evening. I hope that she will even charge him with the mission to the Swede. My uncle could manage that disagreeable matter much better than I could, but what shall I do while waiting for him to take my place?"

It was not easy to find an answer to this question, and Savinien sadly returned to his chair to think it over. He rested his elbows upon the table on which he had placed the casket, and, forgetting that his obliging friend George Fougeray was waiting near by to be allowed to enter, he became lost in thought of anything but an enlivening character. The situation was indeed a trying one, and there was yet much to do.

Supposing that Aparanda consented to give up the child on receiving the diamonds, the help of the faithful Brigitte would now be necessary, for she knew the child whom Savinien had never seen. Savinien also needed the key of the casket in order to open it, and Madame Montauron had omitted to give it to him when instructing him as to what he was to do as regards the diamonds. It was not to be hoped that Aparanda would conclude the negotiations without seeing the jewels. Before interviewing him, it was necessary to see the lady or her confidential servant, and he asked himself whether he would not do better to profit by the occasion to rid himself of the casket which had given him so much trouble. He had, after all, merely promised to take it back, and could now rightfully confine himself to restoring it to Madame Montauron or her servant, instead of undertaking a perilous campaign.

M. de Trémorin was the rightful defender of Aurélie de Louvigné, and if she resolved to confess everything fully to him, he would undoubtedly consent to treat in her name with an enemy whom he had long known, and whom he could prevent from harming her. In any case, Savinien risked nothing by awaiting the result of the interview which his uncle would have with Madame Montauron; and for the moment there was nothing to be done but to take away that accursed coffer. He was about to do so, when he recollected the husband, whom he had forgotten, and who, however, must needs be remembered. What had become of him since his, Savinien's, flight from the vaults? He could not have dared

to set out after him in the streets and give him chase, nor was it to be supposed that he had quietly returned to his office and his business. It was rather to be feared that he had hidden himself near the house in the Rue Rembrandt, where he must suppose that Savinien would soon appear with the casket under his arm.

Montauron had a brougham with an excellent horse standing ready for him. He could arrive in the Rue Rembrandt before M. d'Amaulis, who could only use a cab. The idea of stopping the viscount on his way must, besides, have occurred to him. Even supposing that he did not wish to watch him himself, nothing would prevent his charging the doorkeeper with this unpleasant task, and himself undertaking to watch his own house in the Avenue Ruysdael, so as to see that the viscount did not enter it.

"If I am seen with this casket about me all will be lost," said Savinien to himself. "I must return home with empty hands."

A slight noise caused him to turn his head. George Fougeray was peeping out of the bed-room, the door of which he had opened cautiously.

"You can come in now, I am alone," called out Viscount d'Amaulis.

"I thought that I heard nothing more," replied George, who entered as he spoke. "Don't imagine that I was listening behind the door; no, I was sitting at the other end of the room writing a letter, but Monsieur de Trémorin spoke so loud that the sound of his voice reached my ears. When all became silent again I thought that you had both gone off, English fashion, without saying good-bye. But here you are, and all is well. Would it be indiscreet to ask how you happened to meet each other on my landing?"

"My uncle saw me in the street and I did not see him. He ran up after me, and did not overtake me till he reached your staircase."

"You would have preferred to avoid him, would you not? You have just had a good lecture. Has he found out that your note is in Pinchard's hands?"

"No, very fortunately. He is angry enough as it is."

"The fact is that the old gentleman does not look as though he were easy to deal with. I can now understand why you don't dare to ask him to pay your debts. It is a great pity, as everything is upside down, and the note is almost due."

"What do you mean by upside down? You will be ready to meet it, I hope?"

"I shall do my best, but I am in fear of a bad liquidation on the fifteenth. The 'Ottoman' stock is running down."

"The deuce it is! and here am I relying upon you! If you don't pay I dare not think what would happen."

"The note would be protested, that is what would happen. It won't kill us."

"My uncle would never forgive me for having compromised myself."

"He would know nothing about it. Besides, whatever happens I shall not allow any one to sue you. Don't torment yourself, and let us talk of something else. You came to see me to day; what did you wish?"

"Nothing. I was passing by and came in."

"Tell me frankly that you were trying to get rid of Monsieur de Trémorin who was behind you? Ah! you must be afraid of him, to hide like a schoolboy who has been running away from his lessons. Where were you coming from when he began to run after you?"

"I was going home."

"That reply—worthy of Normandy—doesn't tell me where you had been; but then you are not called upon to tell me. But what is this casket doing among my cigars? Is that pretty thing yours?"

"I brought it here."

"The work is very fine. That must be worth something, without counting what may be inside it. Are you collecting articles of *virtù* just now? I didn't know that your taste ran that way."

Savinien said nothing. He hesitated to give utterance to an idea which had just occurred to him. "Where did you buy that?" asked George.

"It does not belong to me. It has been entrusted to me. I don't know where to put it."

"Take it home with you."

"No, I am scarcely ever in my rooms, and my drawers close so badly."

"Well, then, take it to the Provincial Bank. There are vaults there for such things."

Amaulis started; for this advice seemed to allude to his former request as to the casket. But George had no malicious intentions.

"You don't, perhaps, care to take Montauron and Bouret into your confidence anent these little affairs," he said.

"Exactly!" replied Savinien. "Have you a safe or a chest here?"

"A safe, my dear friend, and one of the best imaginable. It was the first thing that I bought when I took this second floor. A man does not appear to be in earnest unless he has a safe, especially when he does business."

"Well, then, will you do me the favour to put this casket inside it?"

"Willingly, the more so as it will procure me the pleasure of seeing you here again when you come to take it back. You haven't come very often of late. It is a month since you set foot here."

"That's true, and I beg of you to overlook it; but I will return to-morrow or the day after."

"The sooner the better. But let me know the day before, as I go out a great deal. I am doing all I can to make arrangements to meet that confounded bill."

"I will write to you or send you a telegram."

"Then let us go into my bed-room. My safe is at the head of my bed."

Savinien took the casket up and followed George, who led him to a safe secured to the wall between two cabinets in imitation-buhl. A very elegant safe it was, with a combination lock, secret drawers, and fire-proof compartments for bank-notes.

"The mischief of it is that this safe is empty," said Fougeray, with a laugh; "I haven't got my 'Ottoman' stock here—it is at Galipot's, and it is all I possess; but some day I shall fill this affair. Rheinthal is coming back, and meantime we will put the jewel-box inside, for this beautifully chiseled affair can't be anything but a jewel-box, especially as it does not weigh much."

This lively talk put Savinien on thorns, but the unlucky casket was at last shut up in a safe where M. Montauron would not find it, and the viscount took leave of George after thanking him. He longed to return home and find out what had happened during his absence.

VII.

It was the day when the race for the Grand Prize of Paris is run in the Bois de Boulogne. All Paris was at Longchamp—not merely the "all Paris" that appears at the first performances of new plays, but artisan Paris and citizen Paris, the workshop and the studio, the Rue du Sentier and the Faubourg Saint Antoine. The city was deserted. The crowd had begun accumulating in the lower part of the Champs Elysées, and it extended to the sward in front of the race course. There were long lines of carriages starting from all directions and meeting at Longchamp; diminutive dog-carts brought chance "swells" from the extremest suburbs, and huge mail coaches, with well-matched horses, passed along filled with club-men, with glasses hanging about their necks, and racing-tickets swinging from their button holes.

Women, flashing meteor-like in their bright dresses, drove by in open carriages drawn by horses harnessed *à la* Daumont. The sun beamed upon the scene, and the macadamised road was dusty despite all the coming and going of the municipal watering carts. The long procession of vehicles ascending the Champs Elysées delighted the rows of loungers who sat on iron chairs, which are let out at a penny a piece. Here were any number of imitation fops and third-rate "irregulars," interspersed with some of those respectable families who enjoy pleasure when it costs nothing; while here and there a few ruined racing-men tried to pass themselves off as *blasés* for whom the joys of the turf had no further temptation. There were foreigners everywhere. Every language except French was heard on the boulevard, and one was reminded of the mournful days of 1815 on hearing so many Russians with tapering moustaches, Germans with big whiskers, Englishmen with sandy hair, talking as fast as their tongues could wag. All Europe had flocked to Paris, and the new world also had its representatives in various skinny Yankees and swarthy Brazilians.

At Longchamp itself—over the vast expanse of turf facing the grand-stands—an immense crowd of horses, carriages, and human beings was collected pell-mell, and the crush became greater every minute. Railroads and steamboats constantly brought new sight-seers from every direction. Pedestrians spread about over the empty spaces, gliding in between the vehicles, or grouping themselves near the ropes. Breaks, mail-coaches, and eight-spring landaus approached as near as they could to the winning-post, The stands were crowded, and the one reserved for ladies resembled a horticultural exhibition, such was the variety of colour of the dresses. The whole enclosure was crammed with people.

The sky, which the year before had rained torrents upon the throng, was now serene. The weather was admirably suited for the occasion. The horses would not have to run before a hundred thousand umbrellas as had happened in 1880, and it was not too warm.

Indeed the afternoon would be a perfect one if a French horse only won the famous prize, for patriotism never fails to rejoice in national success, and every victory over England at Longchamp is thought by the people of Paris to be a revenge for the defeat of Waterloo.

It is now three o'clock. The Armenonville and Ispahan prizes have been contested by way of enabling the impatient public to while away their time. In the front rank of the carriages, and in an excellent place for

watching the running, Mademoiselle Fourcas is seated in a superbly appointed barouche, drawn by two horses of mettle. Her uncle, obliged by custom to appear and watch over her, sits beside her. Somewhat further on, one may perceive the roomy landau belonging to the banker of the Avenue Ruysdael. The body, wheels, horses, coachman and footmen shine like burnished gold. The whole affair is highly suggestive of millions of money. Madame Montauron is alone. Her husband has gone to stroll about the enclosure or elsewhere. She wears an upper skirt of black moire over an under one of black and white satin. This semi-mourning contrasts vividly with the splendour of her turn-out.

Still further on, lost among the carriages, and in the very midst of the clan of "irregulars," Anita's victoria is visible. The giddy actress is attired in blue satin, well suited to her blonde hair, upon which a hat with blue feathers is daintily perched. She is alone in the vehicle, but a crowd of friends of both sexes exchange greetings with her and surround her, to the envy of some women of the same appearance, who have a few imitation fops about them.

Inside the enclosure at the foot of the left hand stand Baron de Trémorin and his daughter are seated. The baron is dressed in good taste, in spite of the fact that he has not lived in Paris for thirty years. Yvonne wears a dress of navy-blue batiste, and a simple straw hat, trimmed with clusters of lilies of the valley, and she is charming to behold. Men of fashion, with flowers in their button-holes, pass and repass in front of her, and ask one another who she is, but the baron's presence prevents them from staring too fixedly at her. The old gentleman's appearance is extremely distinguished.

George Fougeray wanders about everywhere. He has risked bowing to Savinien's uncle, who returns a semi-bow. George is much too busy to notice this. He strolls backwards and forwards from the bookmakers' corner to the weighing room, trying to pick up information and make up his betting-book. Bouret also flutters about in all directions. He prefers, however, to be near some "old guards" of the irregular world who have come to bet, and are sufficiently well informed. They point out the horses that are likely to win, and he, in return, gives them tips concerning Bourse matters as they will be on the morrow.

Adhémar de Lallemas is perched upon the Jockey Club stand. He has bet a somewhat large sum on Corrigan, in the Ville de Paris handicap, and wishes to see the race. However, from the roof of the stand he catches sight of Mademoiselle Fourcas, and feels vexed at not being able to approach her. The noble marquis is, in point of fact, scarcely himself to-day, for his venture is a desperate one. If Scobell wins the great prize, Adhémar will be again afloat, but if he is beaten, Adhémar, like the gambler in Regnard's play, will have leisure to think of the adorable young girl whom he hopes to marry.

Count Aparanda has come to Longchamp on horseback, followed by a groom, and has galloped across the turf, and stationed himself near the last turn of the course, perhaps to avoid certain persons whom he does not care to meet. He has spoken to no one, but several people are aware of his presence.

Among the club-men and racing men in the enclosure one can espy various betting women, who have succeeded in getting in on the arm of an escort, for women are not allowed to enter the sanctuary unaccompanied. On French racecourses the backers always comprise a number of women of

all ranks of society. Some "irregulars" of notoriety do not shrink from interviewing trainers and jockeys, to whom they make themselves amiable in hopes of wresting from them some of the secrets of the turf. Others do not go so far, but pick up information wherever they can get it, and are never better pleased than when they can obtain private hints from reliable sources as to the "good form" of a favourite, how he has eaten his oats or performed his trial gallop.

Among these feminine backers one must not forget the little Countess de Gravigny, whose passion for gambling even the Bourse fails to satisfy. She bets on all the races, for in the same way as she gets her tips about stocks and shares from a broker's clerk she derives private information as to horses and their merits from a groom employed by a well-known trainer. To-day the decisive battle will be fought. She has done nothing but lose money since the spring. She is in debt, and like Laffemas and others, she is threatened with an unpaid promissory note. She must win, or things will turn out badly for her. But she counts on winning. She is in the enclosure, and has been there since two o'clock; her husband having taken her and left her there. This gentleman never interferes with his wife's amusements, being of so accommodating a disposition. The countess knows everybody, and her tongue has plenty of practice.

She chats with M. de Boisguérin and with Glébof, who varies the conversation by recommending an "outsider" at fifty to one. She chats with the obliging "starter" who will give the signal. She chats with the groom of the horse that Fred Archer is to ride, and the young fellow tells her that the health both of the horse and the jockey has never been better.

At this moment she is not thinking of Madame Montauron, or of Mademoiselle Fourcas, any more than of the terrible Pinchard, who, however, is not far off, for he is conferring with a pale, thin bookmaker who is seated on a chair under a tree. He is whispering in his ear, and, is no doubt, interested in his money-making operations.

Not one of the persons with whom Savinien d'Amaulis has recently associated is absent from the great international gathering at Longchamp. But Savinien himself is not there, or at least he has not shown himself either to his friends or enemies, who all, without exception, particularly wish to see him.

His cousin, Adhémar, waited for him until two o'clock, to take him to the races in his phaeton, and finding that he did not appear, started off alone. The Marquis de Laffemas is greatly surprised by the viscount's failure to appear on the day of the Grand Prize, and is somewhat annoyed at his not keeping his appointment with him. Savinien, on his side, is greatly surprised that he has not met any of the people he has wished to meet for several days past. It is his own fault as regards Adhémar, but his cousin was not in mind. The persons he wished to see were M. de Trémorin and Madame Montauron, or at least Brigitte in the latter's place.

Setting aside the fact that his uncle had threatened to hold aloof from him until he made up his mind to confess everything, and not forgetting that the old nobleman, prior to the explanation at George Fougeray's, had invited him to breakfast with him on the morrow, Savinien had called at eleven o'clock in the morning at the restaurant of the Lion d'Or. The baron was not there, however. He had gone out with his daughter, and had informed the waiters at the Rue du Helder hotel that he would not be at home all day.

Sorrowful, but not discouraged, Savinien had returned to the hotel

every day, and indeed often twice in the course of twenty-four hours. Lovers are persistent. But he went to all this trouble in vain. M. de Trémorin was always out, and he invariably took Yvonne with him. It was evident that he had adopted stern measures as regards his nephew, who began to regret having so closely guarded the secret of the banker's wife. And, as an increase of misfortune, this unlucky secret began to weigh heavily upon the unfortunate viscount, who had not been able to advance one step in the matter, as he had not succeeded in obtaining from Madame Montauron a release from the engagement he had so lightly made.

After the fortunate removal of the casket which he had left with his friend George, the viscount had returned home empty-handed and light-hearted. He had found the doorkeeper walking up and down the sidewalk in front of the house in the Rue Rembrandt. It was evident that the man was not there for nothing. He was watching for his tenant's return, conformably with the landlord's orders. Evidently M. Montauron had called there, as Savinien had guessed, and taken upon himself the task of mounting guard at the palatial abode in the Avenue Ruysdaël.

However, Montauron's device did not enable him to ascertain anything of importance. His doorkeeper saw no parcel under M. d'Amaulis' arm, and the casket was much too large to be hidden in a pocket. So the banker only learnt that M. d'Amaulis had not brought it to his rooms. The danger of a visit, which would at once have occasioned a scene, was therefore avoided, but this was not enough to calm the viscount's mind, for the director of the Provinciai Bank had undoubtedly questioned his clerks. He therefore knew that Savinien had called and removed a casket from the vaults, and he must more than ever be convinced that this casket was the property of his wife.

What would the jealous banker now do? It was impossible to guess. The only available course was to wait until something "turned up," and waiting was not to Savinien's taste. He longed to regain his liberty in order to re-acquire the good opinion of his uncle and his cousin. Madame Montauron alone could enable him to do this, and he hoped that she would speedily do so. However, the first day passed by without any message from her, and Savinien was greatly surprised at this. And neither on the morrow, nor on the day after, was there any sign of life. Still, Madame Montauron must have seen M. de Trémorin, and have spoken to him concerning the casket and her secret. So what was the meaning of this alarming silence? Was Madame Montauron watched? It indeed seemed as if this were the case; but, then, was Brigitte watched as well? She had a good excuse for coming to the Rue Rembrandt, as her sister lived in the house, and she knew that M. d'Amaulis was expecting her day after day.

What was he to do to acquaint the confidential servant with the fact that her mistress's diamonds had been deposited in George Fougeray's rooms, and that they were consequently at Madame Montauron's disposal, for her to keep them if she pleased, or to hand them over to Aparanda in exchange for her daughter?

Should Savinien write? He at first thought of so doing, but it was a measure full of danger. Jealousy respects nothing, and M. Montauron had perhaps reached that degree of exasperation when a gentleman loses all thought of delicacy, and goes so far as to open what may appear to him to be suspicious letters. Savinien did not dare to run this risk. He

preferred to see Madame Montauron openly. The idea was a very bold one, but there were some chances of success.

Accordingly, on the third day, at the hour when Madame Montauron was usually at home he went in visiting attire and rang at the main entrance, as he had done on the morrow of his arrival in Paris. But this time he was not admitted. The liveried footman who opened the gate informed him that the "baroness" was ill, and could not receive any one. The "baron" was also poorly, said the well-trained servant, so Savinien had to content himself with leaving his card.

He did not believe a word about this sudden illness, invented to enable M. Montauron to close his doors against his wife's friends, but he realised that it was a formal order, and that he should not succeed in forcing his way into the house.

He could not, however, remain on bad terms with his uncle until the perhaps far distant day when Madame Montauron would find a means of entering into communication with him; and, moreover, he was not disposed to renounce his dearest hopes in order to remain at the orders of this woman, who certainly did not deserve that Yvonne should be sacrificed to her. So he now determined to make a fresh effort to see M. de Trémorin. He wished to have a frank explanation with his uncle, to tell him fully what he had done, and ask him what Madame Montauron had said; and also to repudiate all further interest in her affairs, and beg his uncle to treat him like a son, as he had done before.

Nothing was apparently easier than to meet his uncle somewhere, however much he might go out. A man may often go out and stay away a long time, but he must needs be at home sometimes, especially when he has a young girl in his charge. Savinien soon found, however, that he was wrong in this calculation. M. de Trémorin continued to remain invisible. Savinien always came too soon or too late by five minutes. It seemed as though the imp of ill-luck had something to do with it, and the young fellow began to believe that his uncle must go in and out by the door that opened on the Chaussée d'Antin, that lucky door which Madame Montauron had made use of to escape from her husband.

He might have called upon M. de Trémorin at the hour of rising, or have waited for his return: but he feared a rough reception, as the baron was so irascible, and Savinien by angering him would have lost his last chance, for the old nobleman was not a man to restrain himself before his daughter, and Yvonne might thus hear things of which she ought to remain ignorant, under penalty of being wounded in the heart.

All that Viscount d'Amaulis could do was to accost his cousin's waiting-maid, a little peasant girl from Brittany, who wore a starched cap turned back at the sides, like those in use at Plouër, and ask her about her employers. He learned from this girl that M. de Trémorin spent all his time with his relations in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, dining sometimes with one, sometimes with another of them, and breakfasting no matter where, excepting at the Lion d'Or, although the latter had been his favourite restaurant.

This information was by no means calculated to set Savinien at his ease. He knew that one of his noble cousins had a mania for match-making, and he saw in imagination a procession of suitors parading before Yvonne. The peasant girl added, however, perhaps to console him, that "mademoiselle" was sad, and did not like Paris at all. At this, Savinien bade her tell her mistress that he called every day, and that he would not

re of calling But this was not enough to quiet the impatience which evoured him, and he finally decided to write to his uncle, begging him o fix a day and hour for seeing him.

The answer came prompt enough. It consisted of three lines:— Madame Montauron did not receive me. I have nothing to tell you. When you make up your mind to tell me the truth let me know, and I ill call on you for the purpose of hearing it."

This note was the finishing stroke, and it almost killed Savinien. He elt that all was lost if he still persisted in remaining silent; and at all azards Madame Montauron must be induced to authorise him to tell ie truth.

In utter despair he began wandering, like a soul in pain, round about ie banker's house, in the vague hope of meeting Brigitte or being seen by er mistress. He knew that Madame Montauron's rooms were on the rst floor, facing the courtyard, and he hoped that she would see him om her window, guess his agonised state of mind, and find some means of nding his troubles. But it was in vain that he slowly strolled in front of ie house, and walked about the Parc Monceau near the railing of Monauron's grounds, the banker's wife did not appear; she did not even raise corner of the curtain, as she had done on the day when he had first called pon her husband.

He knew not what to do. But one Sunday, at about noon, as he was alking along the Avenue Ruysdael, he observed some grooms harnessing orses to the eight-spring landau, the carriage only used on ceremonious ccasions, and he conjectured that M. Montauron was going to Longchamp o witness the race for the Grand Prize. He also guessed that the financier ould not go alone. He would not have brought out his best horses if Iadame Montauron had not meant to accompany him. Now, Savinien had ot forgotten the great race, and he blessed the unhoped-for chance hich at last offered itself of speaking to the banker's wife.

It seemed to him impossible that no occasion should offer itself during ie whole afternoon, and he resolved, at least, to make an attempt to peak with her. But he also concluded that to be quite at liberty he had etter dispense with the Marquis de Laffemas' company, and go to Longhamp in a cab.

He had some difficulty in finding one after breakfast, and it was already ate when he alighted near the Tour du Moulin, and made his way into the nclosure. Something told him that he was not losing his time, and his eart beat fast as he walked towards the stands where all the aristocracy f Paris had congregated.

Savinien was no longer the young gentleman "from the country" freshly rrived from Brittany, who was astonished at every step he took. A ojourn of six weeks in Paris had sufficed to acclimate him in a city which s altogether unlike Rennes and still more unlike Plouer. He knew the Bois de Boulogne by heart, and the Allée des Poteaux had no secrets or him. But he had never been to the Longchamp races, and did not now which way to turn to find what he wanted. Before him stretched he immense sward covered with groups in motion, and isolated pedestrians prinkled about like black spots over the green turf. On his left, beyond he enclosure, the verge of the wood was fringed with lookers-on, who ad been there since morning, and had breakfasted together while waiting or the gratuitous exhibition. On his right innumerable carriages were rawn up ten rows deep, and beyond were the stands with their steps

covered with seated spectators, their roofs spangled with parasols of every hue, and looking like fields of ripe corn mingled with *bleuets* and poppies.

The eight-spring landau which had brought the Montaurons to Longchamp would certainly be found among the carriages, but how was Savinien to discover its whereabouts amid this thicket of vehicles? And how could he escape various meetings which he wished to avoid, while dodging about among the wheels and horses? How could he speak to the wife without being seen by the husband, and how was he to speak with her alone?

Savinien could only trust to chance, and hope that Providence would lead him straight to the banker's landau at a moment when Madame Montauron might find herself alone; and also that he would be spared an encounter with any one whom he wished to avoid.

His cousin Adhémar, no doubt, sat on the stand reserved to the Jockey Club or in the circle gathered in the weighing-room, and Savinien did not fear finding himself face to face with him, but where was the banker? Would he take sufficient interest in the races to mingle with the racing men, or would he content himself with looking on from his landau like a prince of finance, as he was, watching his wife all the while? Why had he brought his wife here, after watching her like this for several days with jealous care and closing his door against everybody, even against M. de Trémorin? The idea of displaying her in public, after such absolute seclusion, was unaccountable, unless it was that Madame Montauron had really been ill, and had come to Longchamp to acquaint Paris with her recovery.

Savinien willingly assumed that this hazardous supposition was well founded. One always believes what one wishes to believe. However, whatever might be the truth, he could hesitate no longer, and so he walked towards the immense gathering of carriages which stretched over the turf from the winning-post, past all the stands, to the turn where the horses reach the distance.

The viscount made his way over the course just as the preparations for running the Ville de Paris handicap were completed, and he fell into the midst of that crowd of pedestrians who pay a franc's entrance fee, and constitute what is known on the turf as the "rope public." They are a motley throng of loungers and backers for small amounts, who are neither remarkable for politeness nor for style. Several of these people had brought their wives and daughters to show them the horses sent from England expressly for the great race. They had purchased programmes and told their better-halves the names of the competitors, holding on to the rope at the same time, and always shutting their eyes when the horses dashed past them like a whirlwind. They never saw them afterwards, and never learned the winner's name till it had been half an hour in everybody else's mouth. But nothing would induce them either to let go or leave their places.

The backers for petty amounts were worse than the mere sightseers. They crowded together, jostled each other, and exchanged fisticuffs in their eagerness to secure places in the front row. When they succeeded they became still more outrageous—shouted, vociferated, howled, and yelled at the jockeys, gesticulating in such a manner that they often damaged the eyes of those near them. All these people formed so compact a mass that Savinien soon saw the impossibility of making his way through them. After a few idle attempts at gliding towards the carriages, he decided to

abandon the attempt in this direction and proceed lower down the course, while there was yet time. He did so, and the first vehicles he reached were those which had been the last to arrive—those which had come too late to secure good positions, and among them he did not discern one face known to him. The further he advanced along the outer line the less easy it became to penetrate through the labyrinth of carriage-springs. The mail-coaches often hid the lower vehicles, so that he might easily pass Madame Montauron's equipage without seeing her. It was, therefore, necessary to find out the best way to proceed, no matter what happened, and at last he succeeded, by bending down almost to the ground and passing under the shaft of a carriage, the horses of which spattered him with foam. The first obstacle once overcome, it became less difficult to move about, and he had chosen a good time for doing so.

The race which was just being run was of some importance, and everybody was on the look out. Women had risen from their seats and raised their opera-glasses to look at the ten horses engaged in the race, and which were galloping round the other side of the course.

Savinien, by dint of ferreting out a passage for himself, had gained ground, and ended by finding himself in the heart of the hubbub, in view of the stands and within a hundred yards of the starting-post. Madame Montauron must be somewhere in this direction. People worth millions always find good places everywhere, and the banker was not a man to occupy a back seat.

Savinien, more attentive than before, stood on tiptoe in his efforts to discern the familiar maroon and gold livery, which he would have recognised among a thousand. No one troubled about looking at him. The horses were coming up, and a confused clamour arose. For the time being, Viscount d'Amaulis saw nothing but people's backs in front of him, and, as he wished to profit by the moment when the spectators, the women especially, would turn round and show their faces, he ventured to step upon the footboard of a victoria occupied by a woman, to whom he did not pay any attention, although she was well worth looking at. It is true that at the moment she was standing up with an opera-glass to her eyes.

Savinien was not heavy, but his weight made the victoria oscillate. This was all that was needed for the woman to lay down her glass and turn round to see what individual was disturbing her equilibrium.

"What! is it you?" she exclaimed. "Now, it is very kind of you to come to me for a seat. I thought that we should be bad friends after that affair at the kiosk! But you have too much sense to bear a grudge against me, for you must have guessed that it was not my fault."

Viscount d'Amaulis alighted much quicker than he had mounted. His evil star had brought him to a person whom he had indeed no wish to see. Among so many vehicles he had been unlucky enough to light upon the well-known victoria of the well-known blonde, in a word, Anita the actress.

He naturally longed to beat a retreat, but how was this to be managed? He was fairly caught in a trap.

"Come up!" resumed the actress, beginning to use her glass once more. "I have five louis on Bouvreuil, and I want to see him win. The mischief! his jockey is hard at work on him, and Corrigan is ahead. Corrigan will win; yes, he is ahead, and that wretch, Bouret, told me just now that he was a broken-down horse! I might have had him at twenty, and Bouret wouldn't let me bet on him! That makes five louis gone! I'll make Bouret pay them back to me!"

Savinien did not listen to this speech. He was trying to find some excuse for going off, and was so much annoyed that he could not think of any.

"What is the matter, my dear fellow?" said Anita, seating herself again. "You look so cross at me! I think you do bear a grudge against me! Well, I declare that you are wrong if you do. I wasn't brought up on the lap of a duchess, but I know how to behave myself, and I'm not spiteful. If I had suspected that you were courting Mademoiselle Fourcas, and that you were an intimate friend of Madame Montauron, I shouldn't have stopped to poke fun at them, under pretext of buying some cigarettes, but I didn't know anything about all that, and, besides, I was asked to do it."

"By whom?" asked the viscount, interested in spite of himself by this preamble.

"By Aparanda, of course! you saw him yourself. I cannot imagine what grudge he has against the Montaurons, but he thinks of nothing but doing them harm. As they are friends of yours, you would do well to warn them against him. I am very sorry that I listened to him, the Swedish bear that he is! He made me quarrel with Colonel Cavaroc. I ought to have remembered all that I heard about the count. He is a mere adventurer, my dear fellow; I have found that out."

"But you still allow this Swede to visit you," replied Savinien.

"No, I don't! I sent him about his business. He is going to leave Paris to be hanged elsewhere, I suppose. He is going off to-morrow with the money he has cheated so many people out of."

"Are you sure of that?"

"He told me so just now, and had the audacity to come up to me to say it. But I beg of you to believe, my dear fellow, that I treated him as he deserved, and if I could only play him some good trick before he goes off I should only be too glad."

"What, did Count Aparanda tell you that he was going to leave Paris to-morrow? He is here, then?"

"Yes, he is here," replied Anita. "He never loses a chance of making any money. That man has got hold of some tricky bookmaker, and found some way of cheating backers, you may be sure of it. He has scandalous luck in betting, as he has in everything else. In the race just now he had twenty-five louis on Corrigan. I must do him the justice to say that he advised me to bet on him, but I wouldn't do it."

"I thought that you had nothing more to say to him?"

"Oh, I received him so badly that he will never come again. But I couldn't prevent him from alighting and coming to speak to me."

"Alighting? What do you mean?"

"He came on horseback, followed by a groom as badly mounted as he is, for you know that he has no horses. He lives in furnished rooms at the Grand Hôtel. At least so I learnt only lately."

"Has he left the race-course?"

"He? No fear! He must have some bets on the Grand Prize, and he won't leave till he gets his money. If you want to meet him, you have only to saunter up and down on the grass in front of the refreshment tent. He was galloping about just now over the field, and I presume that he has his reasons for not going into the enclosure."

"I have no desire to meet him."

"Then stay by me, my dear friend! He won't come near me. I

on't say, though, that he isn't prowling about Madame Montauron's ndau."

"Madame Montauron's—— Have you seen her?"

"Certainly. Her husband too. Everybody has seen them. They me in great style, and their turn-out is the handsomest thing here. I n surprised that you have not seen it."

"I have only just come."

"And you came to see me first of all! Thank you, viscount. I'm ot sure that you meant to come, but I'm glad that you are not angry; nd as I'm not ungrateful, I will show you where the people are that you e looking for."

"I beg your pardon. I did not tell you that I was looking for ny one."

"No, but I guessed it. You will find Madame Montauron a hundred eps from here. Her landau is near the ropes. She has not left it, and I ink that she is alone, for when the horses started just now I saw her usband talking to a couple of brokers in front of the grand stand. He ust be there still."

"The carriage is a hundred steps from here, you say?"

"Yes, on the right, going towards the winning-post. You can see it you will step up on the seat of my victoria, when those spurious swells, ho are in our way, make up their minds to alight from that break ver there."

"I am very much obliged to you, but——"

"You would prefer not to be seen in my trap? As you please, my ear fellow, I don't mind that in the least, and as a proof of it, I will tell ou something more, Mademoiselle Fourcas is a little further off, near ie post, with an old gentleman who looks as though he might be an uncle r a guardian. He may be rather an annoyance, but he doesn't look very vage, and if you will listen to me—but no! you don't want my advice, nd I see two young friends of mine over there who will tell me how atters stand as regards Dublin, my favourite in the Grand Prize. I ave certain information that he will win if he only tries. You ought to et twenty-five louis on him, my dear boy. That will make up for a part f what you lost to Aparanda."

Savinien, who was anxious to escape, muttered a few words of thanks, nd yielded his place to some young men who were coming up.

After each race there is always some stir among the groups of rriages. The owners alight, the coachmen settle their harness, and ookmakers' messengers don't hesitate to take hold of the horses' bridles, nd force the vehicles back, should they impede their passage.

Thus circulation, previously impossible, now became comparatively easy, nd Viscount d'Amaulis took advantage of an opening to disappear ehind an enormous mail-coach, which hid him from the insinuating nita.

This giddy creature had rendered him an important service, as but r the information she had given him he might have spent the rest of the ay looking for Madame Montauron without finding her, and thus have st this opportunity of bringing matters to an issue. There was now not moment to be lost if he wished to profit by the temporary absence of ie husband.

Besides, Savinien was determined to speak to the wife, no matter what appened. After all, M. Montauron had only such complaints to make

against him as he must of necessity keep to himself, so he would hardly venture upon doing what in the days of chivalry was called "breaking one's lance in one's adversary's visor," or, in other words, openly cutting or insulting the nephew of his friend, Baron de Trémorin. And if, as was unlikely, he ventured to express any anger on the race-course, if he broke out into reproach or abuse, the explanation which would result would be still less painful than the bitter uncertainty in which Viscount d'Amaulis had spent the last few days. It was better to quarrel with Montauron than to be at variance with Yvonne's father. Besides, the young fellow hoped to reach the landau before the financier's return, and in this he succeeded. After wandering in and out among the carriages, keeping always to the right, and approaching nearer and nearer to the winning-post, he finally discerned the black dress and pallid face of Madame Montauron. She was alone in her carriage, but the coachman had not left his seat on the box, and the footmen stood within call, that is to say, much too near to the vehicle to suit Savinien.

There was no time, however, for hesitation, for time was precious, and, besides, Madame Montauron had caught sight of him and made a sign to him to come near her. She appeared calm enough, although a deep blush rose to her cheeks. Nothing gave evidence of recent illness. Savinien came forward, hat in hand, and the discreet footmen, being well trained, withdrew to a short distance. The way was free, and he took advantage of it to go straight to his object.

"At last I can speak with you," said he in a whisper, but affecting the half-smiling and ceremonious manner which a well-bred man assumes when he bows to a lady, a manner calculated to deceive any lackeys who may be about.

"I thought that you had abandoned me," said Madame Montauron dejectedly and in a low voice.

"I abandon you! I who——"

"Every one has deserted me. I have not seen your uncle for five days."

"My uncle! he wrote to me that he had called on you and that you would not receive him."

"Is that really true?"

"I swear to you, madame, that it is so, and I add and affirm that I myself have tried to communicate with you. I looked for a letter from you or a visit from Brigitte."

"Brigitte fell on the stairs and hurt herself seriously. She cannot walk yet, and I cannot trust any one but her. All the other servants are under my husband's orders. I am closely watched, and you have just shown me that I am sequestered, as my friends are prevented from coming near me."

"You have not been ill, then?"

"I have been dying with grief and anxiety, that is all," replied Madame Montauron, bitterly.

"You need not die," said Savinien. "I have the casket."

"Since when?"

"Since the day after your charity fair. I succeeded in carrying it off without being caught by Monsieur Montauron, but my uncle has seen it. He was in Monsieur Montauron's office, and ill-luck would have it that he met me as I was leaving the bank. I tried to avoid him, but he followed me. I took refuge at the house of one of my friends. He pressed me with

uestions, and demanded an explanation of my behaviour; asked what ne casket contained; what I was going to do with it——"

"And you told him?" exclaimed Madame Montauron.

"No, madame. I have kept the secret which you have confided to me, nd it has cost me dear. My uncle has closed his doors to me."

"Why? What does he accuse you of?"

"Of carrying on a suspicious intrigue, of having deceived him and his aughter, whom I love to distraction. He thinks that I have some love-etters from a woman in the casket."

"And you did not justify yourself?"

"Could I do so? It would have been necessary to have told him verything."

There was a moment's silence. Madame Montauron looked fixedly t Savinien, who did not avoid her eyes.

"Then," said she, at last, "he does not know to whom this casket elongs?"

"I think, on the contrary, that he feels sure that it belongs to you. Certain questions addressed to him by Monsieur Montauron have put him pon the scent. I denied it, however, whereupon he replied that he would o to you and demand a full explanation, and I admit that I did not ttempt to dissuade him, as I have no hope except in you. My uncle will ot forgive me till my innocence is proved, and you alone can prove it. t depends upon you whether I shall be the happiest or the most wretched f men."

"What do you mean?" asked Madame Montauron, in a voice full of leep emotion.

"I am surprised, madame, that you do not guess," replied Savinien, uickly. "If I were only threatened with the lost of my uncle's regard nd protection I might resign myself, although I love him as though he vere my father; but I must renounce the hope of marrying my cousin, or Monsieur de Trémorin will never allow his daughter to marry a man vhom he accuses of carrying on an intrigue."

"This marriage had been decided upon, had it not?"

"It had, in point of fact. If my uncle had not intended that I should narry Yvonne he would not have sent me away from Plouër. He con-ented himself with sending me to spend a few months in Paris as a kind f trial. I might have shortened this unlucky trial, and if I had had my own way I should have long ago returned to Brittany. But you know what detained me here. Astonished, no doubt, at the long intervals between my letters, my uncle came here without letting me know about it, nd informed me at once that he meant to wait a whole year in Paris, to ring his daughter out in society, and give her a chance to know her own mind."

"You have nothing to fear; she thinks of no one but you, for she loves you, I am sure of it."

"She loved me once," said Savinien, sadly, "but will she continue to love me if her father tells her that I have betrayed her for another?"

"He will not do that; it would be an unworthy act."

"He will do it, madame, and I cannot complain, for he will only be doing what any other man would do in his place. What father would not in such a case warn his daughter?"

"But he knows that the accusation against you merely rests upon appearances. He must know that you love Yvonne."

"You are mistaken, madame. Since he questioned me concerning the casket, and I refused to reply, he feels sure that I am guilty. Do you think that he would refuse to see me if he were not? For several days past I have been trying to meet him without succeeding. He has given orders not to admit me. I am nothing more than a stranger to him now. My only hope is in you. I hope that you will see him, and that he will speak to you as he alone is in a position to do."

"See him! I was awaiting him with impatience."

"Here is his letter," said the viscount, drawing M. de Trémorin's brief note from his pocket-book."

Madame Montauron glanced over it, and her eyes filled with tears. "Thus," said she, in a husky voice, "it is not enough that I should suffer, but you also, who have sacrificed yourself for my sake, you must be made to suffer as to your dearest hopes. You did well to show me that letter; your uncle would not lie. He must have called and I was not told of it, but he will call again, and then——"

"He will not call again," replied Savinien d'Amaulis, shaking his head; "he feels wounded, and is too proud to subject himself to a fresh affront. Besides, Monsieur Montauron, who ordered his servants not to admit him, will not allow him to see you. It is evident that your husband has resolved to isolate you, and I am surprised that he should have brought you here."

"I did not wish to come. But he earnestly begged me to come here with him. We had scarcely driven up when he left me alone. He pretends to treat me as though nothing had occurred. The watchfulness of which I complain is not openly exercised. I feel but I do not see it. What you have told me shows me that my servants tell people that I am too ill to see any one. I cannot think why he has brought me here. Perhaps he has guessed that I might see you."

"Who knows if this is not a trap, and whether he is not watching us now from afar? Perhaps he wishes to have some pretext for asking for explanations which he has not yet ventured to demand. He may mean to question me as to the casket. He will make a mistake if he does so, for I shall tell him nothing. I would not tell him anything after refusing to answer my uncle, and certainly I will never betray you, but your situation will be very painful and mine also."

"Yours!" repeated Madame Montauron, with grief. "Yes, I see it now! You have sacrificed yourself for me, and it remains for me to restore to you both the esteem of your uncle and the love of your betrothed. Monsieur de Trémorin shall know all."

"Then you free me from my promise," cried Savinien, "you authorise me to tell him——"

"That it is I who am guilty," interrupted Madame Montauron; "it is for me to tell him that, and I will tell him although I may die with shame. Your uncle, who was a father to me, will perhaps forgive me for not having in former days made a full confession to him. I wished to tell him everything, but Madame de Morvieux advised me to conceal the existence of my daughter, and I made the mistake of listening to her. If I had followed my own impulses I might have prevented great misfortunes which cannot now be averted; but, at least, I will atone for the harm which I have done you. Take me to Monsieur de Trémorin!"

"Take you to him? Where? To your own house? He would not be admitted, and you forget that he refuses to receive me."

"He would not prevent you from speaking to him here."

"Is he here?"

"Yes, with his daughter. I saw him a moment ago when we came up o the gate near the mill. He was in a cab, which did not drive on to he race-course. I think that he did not see us, for he did not bow, and do not know where he is seated, but you will probably find him near ne of the stands. Tell him that I wish to speak to him immediately, nd let him understand that I wish to exonerate you. He will come."

"Ah, you bring me back to life!" said Savinien, who was greatly noved. "If only my uncle doesn't accuse me, it matters little that others nay suspect. I am still willing to serve you. Dispose of me."

"Thank you, sir. I did not expect less of you, but I will not abuse our devotion. I am going to ask Monsieur de Trémorin to do what you vere ready to do. You must give him the diamonds, so that he may reat with this man."

"In order to give the diamonds to my uncle I must have the key of the asket."

"I have it with me, and will give it to him. It is better that he nould open the casket himself; he will then be quite sure that he has een mistaken as regards you."

"Yes, you are right, it would be better: but do you think that he will onsent——"

"To save me?" interrupted Madame Montauron. "Me, the daughter f his dearest friend? I do not doubt it. But there is not a moment to e lost. My husband may return."

"And in forty-eight hours from this time Count Aparanda will have eft Paris. He so informed that woman whom he ventured to bring to our fair."

"He is at the races, then?" said Madame Montauron, who had radually calmed herself.

"Yes, and he told her he should remain here till the end."

"Your uncle might speak with him to-day. In the name of the girl ou love, find Monsieur de Trémorin and persuade him to come to me nmediately. Bring him up to my carriage. The Grand Prize is about o be run. Profit by the confusion that prevails before the race to cross he course. Monsieur de Trémorin, being with his daughter, must be on he stands somewhere. You will have time to bring him here before the orses start, and I am sure that my husband will stay at the enclosure ll the preliminary canter is over; he said so, at all events."

Savinien was about to offer an objection which occurred to him, but Madame Montauron did not allow him to speak. "There is Monsieur ouret coming up now," said she, hastily. "I can get rid of him, but ou may not be able to do so. Go, sir, go, I beg of you! My life is in our hands!"

Savinien was anxious above everything to avoid the under-manager of he Provincial Bank. He made haste to bow and disappear among the arriages so as to hide from Bouret, who was coming from the circle formed y the bookmakers.

The imprudent viscount felt himself relieved from a great weight now hat the woman whom he had defended had promised to tell M. de Trémorin the whole truth; but he greatly feared that he would not be able bring him to her there. It would first of all be necessary to join him, nd this was no easy matter. Besides, Madame Montauron, in the plan

she had formed, had quite overlooked the fact that Yvonne had not remained at the Rue du Helder hotel. It seemed very unlikely that the nobleman would consent to leave her with Savinien, and, on the other hand, he could not take her with him as the conversation would be such as she ought not to hear.

However, the first thing to do was to find M. de Trémorin, and tell him in a few words that the banker's wife was waiting for him to confide her secret to him. The viscount acted accordingly. He saw the stands, and thought that his uncle must be there. In order to reach them it was only necessary to get through the crowd on the course.

After a few turns, which hid him from the inquisitive gaze of M. Bouret, he succeeded in finding a free passage, and was emerging from the labyrinth of vehicles when he had the misfortune to pass close to an open carriage where Mademoiselle Fourcas was seated near her uncle.

She turned at the moment when he brushed against it, and it was necessary for him to bow; he even felt that this was not enough, for she looked fixedly at him so as to compel him to speak, and he uttered, with some difficulty, a few commonplace words of a polite nature which did not require any reply. However, he was not destined to escape so easily.

"Viscount," said M. Fourcas to him with an air of importance, "the Marquis de Laffemas is looking for you everywhere. He was with us a moment ago, and will return; and if you wish to see him you had better wait for him here."

"But, uncle," said Mademoiselle Fourcas, with a constrained smile, "Monsieur d'Amaulis would no doubt prefer to have a chair over there near Monsieur de Trémorin and his daughter."

"That is true, mademoiselle," replied Savinien, "I was looking for my uncle."

"You could see him from here if the track were not so crowded," said the young girl, and she added:

"Mademoiselle de Trémorin is wearing a very simple style of dress which suits her to perfection."

"My niece would be very happy to offer her a place in our carriage," resumed the uncle, "and I should be most happy to become acquainted with Baron de Trémorin. Is he not, like yourself, viscount, related to the Marquis de Laffemas, whom we are expecting?"

The pompous citizen evidently liked to gargle his throat with these high-sounding titles, and he articulated them with so much emphasis that Savinien could not avoid smiling as he unaffectedly replied: "Adhémar is my cousin on the father's side, his great-great-grandmother was an Amaulis. Monsieur de Trémorin, who is my mother's brother, is not related to Monsieur de Laffemas."

"But he knows him, and would not be sorry to meet the marquis."

"Certainly not, but——"

"Excuse me, uncle," interrupted Mademoiselle Fourcas, "I think that Monsieur de Trémorin has no wish to disturb himself, and that Monsieur d'Amaulis is very anxious to go to him. It is useless for you to persist in detaining him."

This was a formal dismissal from the heiress, which Savinien did not mistake, and he was grateful to her for setting him free. He longed to reach the stands while the passage was still free, and to speak with his uncle. So he profited by this chance to depart; and to cross the course he had only to turn round a huge mail-coach which had driven up near

the starting-post, and occupied more space than three ordinary carriages. Scarcely, however, had Savinien passed this last obstacle when he found himself face to face with his cousin Adhémar, who was coming in the opposite direction, and who cried out, throwing up his arms: "What! You here! I thought you must be ill. Did you know, my dear boy, that I waited for you till two o'clock."

"You must excuse me," stammered Savinien, "an unforeseen impediment arose."

"Oh, I'm not vexed about it! You made me miss the first race, but I made up for it on the second and third. Corrigan and Alphonsine came in ahead. The day has begun well, and I hope it will end better still. I have utilised all my winnings and spare cash in backing Scobell, and I have a neat little sum staked, so that between now and the next half hour I shall have made up for all my losses this year."

"I am delighted, but——"

"By-the-by, you know that you are down for thirty-five louis?"

"Why, how is that?"

"On Scobell. Ten that I bet for you last month, and twenty-five that I have just staked. I don't forget my friends, even when they forget me!"

"I am greatly obliged to you, but if you had consulted me——"

"You wouldn't have made the bet, and you wouldn't pocket the three hundred louis which you will win in spite of yourself! I had the horse at six, and now he's at four. You can thank me after the races are over. Try not to worry yourself in the meantime. I should like to be with you at the moment of triumph, but—you will never guess where I am going now?"

"Yes, I know it. You are going to see Monsieur Fourcas and his charming niece."

"Ah! you went over to them, and they told you that they expected me."

"The uncle told me so."

"Oh, I recognise his style! If he could paint my name on his carriage, he would do so. But it's the truth. I promised not to leave them while the Grand Prize was being run. The worthy old man will ask me the names of the horses, the names of the jockeys, and all about their owners. Ah! as you may well imagine, I would rather stay in the weighing-room or go up on the club-stand. But what can I do? Mademoiselle Fourcas is adorable——"

"And she has a dowry of five millions! I wish with all my heart that she may bring them to you, my dear cousin, and I do not want to detain you. Besides, I am looking for my uncle."

"Monsieur de Trémorin? Of course, you are! I will show him to you. Look! do you see? Over there! on the stand, to the left."

Savinien looked and joyfully recognised the baron, who was seated on the opposite side of the course.

"He is with his daughter, whom I think very pretty, and who will be very rich," added the marquis. "I congratulate you, my dear boy, and you have my best wishes. It is my turn to say: 'Don't let me detain you!' I should, indeed, advise you not to lose a moment, for the crowd is being driven back. The horses are about to start, and you won't be able to cross if you defer matters."

"That is true. I have only just time; good-bye."

"Ah, now that I think of it, I must tell you something that isn't very

agreeable, but which won't surprise you very much, for I told you the other day at the charity fair that it was going wrong——"

"What is going wrong?"

"Well, my dear fellow, after consulting some of my intimates, I made up my mind to withdraw my application for your admission to the Jockey Club."

"Oh, if that is all——"

"You don't care, and you are right, the more so as you will have better luck another time. I acted wisely. You would have had twenty black balls; but next year every one will have forgotten that you ever belonged to the Plungers."

"No! no! I beg of you not to trouble yourself any more about me," said the viscount, who really felt more annoyed than he looked.

"As you please," replied M. de Laffemas. "Next year you will find consolation, if, as I hope, you marry your cousin. Meantime, do come to see us oftener. Even my mother complains of your absence."

The two cousins separated, shaking hands, and Savinien ran towards the course, but reached the barrier too late to cross. The crowd, driven back by police officers, swarmed in the direction of the carriages, and formed an obstacle which the viscount could not overcome.

He tried to resist the rush; he even endeavoured to pass despite all prohibition, but came against a resolute officer, and was obliged to beat a retreat. It was now necessary to return beyond the barrier and remain amid the throng. It was impossible to stir, or even to see, as he was no longer in the front row. His uncle and cousin had disappeared behind a crowd of sightseers who formed a screen in front of them. He could not hope that this screen would part, for the horses were leaving the paddock, and the police were driving away all the people who, having tried to cross too late, still wandered about the course.

Poor Savinien inwardly anathematised Adhémar de Laffemas, who had stopped him at such an inopportune moment, and tried to make up for lost time. He soon saw that there was no way of doing so, and that he must have patience till the end of the run. He had not even the satisfaction of following the phases of the struggle, on which his cousin had, without consulting him, betted in his name, and he was thinking how he might get out of the hubbub, when among the people around him a backward move was made. A gentleman was being jostled about to prevent him from passing, but he moved his elbows so energetically that he at length succeeded in getting through, and emerged from the throng in such a way as almost to fall into the viscount's arms. Savinien received him in a friendly manner, for he recognised George Fougeray, his old school-fellow.

"Where did you come from?" he asked, unthinkingly.

"From the weighing-room, of course!" replied George, "and I thought that I should never reach the club-coach. The police pushed me from behind, and these idiots here pushed me in front with their fists. I came near going down, but never mind, here I am! And you, what are you doing here? It is a lucky thing that I came across you, for I am almost inclined to believe that you are keeping out of my way. I haven't set eyes on you since you brought me that jewel-box, which you ought to take back."

"I will take it back to-morrow, or perhaps to-night."

"To-night, my dear boy, I shall not be at home. I shall be at the ball at Mabille, to conform to custom, for you know that on Grand Prize day

everybody goes to Mabille in the evening. I shan't miss doing so, for I shall be making a holiday of it on account of Albion's victory."

"Albion's victory?" repeated Savinien, who had not looked at the programme.

"Yes. Where did you come from to ask that? Albion will win. Albion is going to set me afloat again, and I have no wish to lose the lovely sight of his galloping up to the post in front of all the others. I shall climb on to our mail-coach. Come, if you like, there's a place up there. But let us make haste."

Savinien was about to refuse, but he soon remembered that the best thing he could do was to secure a position whence he might observe his uncle and Madame Montauron, who were much more in his mind than the races.

"Where is the mail-coach?" he asked.

"There, behind you!" called out George. "Come quick if you wish to get a place. In another moment we shall be crowded. The whole Plungers' Club is here."

Savinien followed his friend and climbed on to the huge vehicle, which already served as a point of vantage for a large party of clubmen.

"We are here at last!" cried Fougeray, "and I shall see how my luck will turn out! Ah! I won't deny that I'm nervous. Anybody would be. My bet on Albion is my last shot."

"Your last shot! How is that?" asked Savinien, anxiously.

"Certainly," replied George, with a careless air. "Didn't I tell you the other day that my Ottomans had turned out badly? The note which Pinchard holds is due on Wednesday, and I all the more wish to be ready, from the fact that I know how you are fixed. Nothing in your cash-box, nothing at the bank, and determined not to ask anything of your uncle. I cannot rely on you, and so I have bet all I possess on Albion, who is sure to win."

"But if he loses——"

"That is impossible," interrupted George. "Albion is the best horse out, and, besides, is in perfect condition. I have just seen him saddled. Round about the paddock every one said: 'There's the winner!'"

"My cousin Adhémar de Laffemas just told me the same thing about Scobell."

"Scobell! He's broken-winded, my dear boy! The trip has knocked him up. He has hardly been able to stand since he arrived in France. He will not even be placed."

"But Adhémar ought to know. He is very well informed."

"Well informed? What stuff! Because he belongs to the Jockey he imagines that he knows more than other people, That is a great mistake, my dear fellow. I'll bet that your noble cousin has some dust in his eyes, and will find himself up a tree."

"So much the worse," coldly replied Savinien, who did not like slang.

"Why so much the worse? Don't I tell you that I have bet on Albion?"

"I know you have, but it appears that I have thirty-five louis on Scobell."

"Don't you know whether you have or not!"

"Adhémar bets for me."

"That is a pretty idea of his! You will lose your thirty-five louis. But I shall make two thousand, and our note won't be protested,"

"So be it," muttered Savinien, who felt no confidence in the prediction.

"There are such strange people in the world, upon my honour!" resumed George, who was growing gradually quite excited. "They bet on a horse which has no chance at all, and they expect everybody to think as they do. Your cousin Laffemas needn't have made an absurd bet in your name. All that is mere conceit. He believed in Scobell at the beginning of the season, and he won't give in. It is just the same with that little goose of a Countess de Gravigny, whom I just met in the enclosure. She has bet on Tristan, and talks of nothing but Tristan. Any one would think, to hear her, that there is nothing in the world equal to the Chamant stud, and that Archer's mount settled everything as to the result. She will soon see, however, what good it does to work up one's imagination on 'private information,' and as she is in Pinchard's clutches, there'll be a fine time of it! I really wonder what her husband will say when they bring him her note of hand."

"Wait till after the race. No one here believes in the same animals."

"Do as I do. Look at the horses. They are coming out."

"I see them, and I won't talk to you any more. One word only. Did you meet Montauron in the enclosure?"

"I should think that I did. He stays there all the time. I don't know why, but I imagine that he didn't go there to stare at the horses. He had two gentlemen with him, who didn't in the least look like racing-men."

"Bankers, perhaps?"

"I don't know; I never saw them at the Bourse."

"That is odd."

"Yes, for Montauron usually keeps with his own set. But what do you care about it? Let me follow Albion, who has begun his canter. Admirable, my dear boy! Wonderful! I would not give my bet for fifteen hundred louis!"

Savinien paid no further attention to what was going on upon the course. He was looking out for those who interested him, and from the point of vantage he occupied he had no trouble in finding out where they were.

Mademoiselle Fourcas was quite near by, and he need not have lost a single gesture had he been disposed to watch her and the Marquis de Laffemas, who, having posted himself in front of her carriage, kept up a very animated dialogue both with her uncle and herself. Further on, Viscount d'Amaulis saw Madame Montauron, and he observed with satisfaction that she was still alone. Her husband had remained in the enclosure, and, to all appearance, intended to stay there till the winner's number went up.

At the foot of the stand, on the left hand side in the enclosure, M. de Trémorin, who was standing, with his daughter seated beside him, did not appear to take much interest in the coming contest. The baron looked absently at the horses which were coming up to the starting-post, but Yvonne gazed vacantly before her, and her pallor showed how much she had suffered.

Savinien would have been glad if she had caught sight of him, but he did not venture to attract her attention by gesticulating, which would have been of no avail, for amid the crush of carriages and spectators it was very difficult to recognise any one at a distance.

"There are ten competitors," said George, whose mind was entirely

aken up with the race. "Look! there's Albion now! he is the sixth, between Scobell and Tristan. Isn't he in good form, my favourite, eh? Goater, who mounts him, won't have to touch him with the whip, I'll answer for it. There's the starter arranging them. They're off! No, they have stopped and gone back. It's a false start! My dear boy, you may believe me or not, but I have not a dry thread on me. Three francs fall on stock would not affect me like this."

"But if it was your 'Ottoman' stock it might," said Savinien.

"Ah! at last! the flag's lowered! this start is a good one! You'll see how Goater will manage the business!"

"Goater is Albion's jockey, isn't he?"

"What a question! I told you so just now."

"But he seems to be behind, or nearly the last."

"Of course! He is not such a fool as to tire his horse out at the first; he is holding him back, and has as much as he can do to accomplish it."

"What horses are ahead?"

"Tristan and Foxhall the American horse. Let them go! They won't come round again in the same order."

"But they have passed the mill, and they are still ahead."

"Yes, and Dublin is second, the wretched, broken-down beast. That proves that the start is of no importance."

"Dublin is Anita's horse. She must be as anxious as you are. But the American horse is still ahead."

"Wait! wait! they have come to the opening near the wood! Foxhall, then Dublin, then Fiddler! The best of them isn't worth much."

"Then the good horses are always behind, according to you."

"No, not exactly. Albion is already fifth; he is advancing more and more."

"That's strange! I thought that he was quite behind."

"You don't understand; but look at Scobell—your cousin's horse! He is last now."

"My thirty-five louis seem to be in peril."

"Ah! they have passed the second turn, now we shall see."

"Which are the horses coming on first?"

"Albion, my dear boy! Albion for ever! The other is Tristan, whom there is no reason to dread, and Dublin weakens—he's done for!"

"The American horse does not weaken, on the contrary."

"Yes, yes, it isn't he who's ahead!"

Savinien did not feel disposed to discuss any further the chances of a contest which a few seconds would decide, so he said no more. The horses were now galloping between the two turnings, and the decisive moment was near at hand. A confused clamour began to rise from the immense concourse of people. A thousand voices howled out the names of the horses, each backer calling out that of his favourite steed, and those that had bets on the lagging horses were not those who shouted the least. It was, perhaps, a way of forgetting their defeat.

"They are reaching the distance," said Savinien. "I do not see Scobell at all."

"He is out of the running, and has been for ever so long," grumbled George.

"Yes, but where is Albion?"

"Can't you see?" replied George, in a tone of vexation. "Albion is so easy to see. He gets nearer and nearer."

"That may be," muttered Savinien, "but just now there are two ahead of him, and it seems to me that Tristan is the most forward one of the couple."

George did not reply, but began to gesticulate like a madman, and shouted: "Albion! Albion!"

The final struggle was about to begin. The horses had passed the last turning, and were making their final effort to reach the goal.

Savinien d'Amaulis had seen clearly. Albion was third, and even behind the two foremost horses by several lengths. Foxhall, the American horse, on whom neither George Fougeray nor Adhémar de Laffemas, the Countess de Gravigny, nor even Anita, had bet—Foxhall had recovered the start which he had momentarily lost. Tristan was approaching on his right, and galloping beside him: his jockey, Fred Archer, who had so far not urged him, now beginning to apply both spurs and whip.

It was the decisive moment, and it seemed as though Tristan, skilfully ridden, would make a final effort and win the race. Indeed, Savinien, who had ended by becoming somewhat excited, wished that Tristan might win, as Albion was out of the running.

But, alas! Tristan did not reply either to the spur or whip, and Foxhall, who had gained half a head, kept in front till the finish. The horses came up so close to one another that there was a moment's hesitation, but No. 13 was presently run up, and the name of Foxhall shouted out by thousands of voices. Flags with stars and stripes fluttered at once from several of the carriages. For the first time since the Grand Prize of Paris had been run, America had achieved a victory at Longchamp.

Tristan, the countess's favourite, had been honourably vanquished, but the unfortunate horse on which George had bet was three lengths behind the two first, and Scobell was ignominiously distanced.

Savinien had lost thirty-five louis, since his cousin was out in his reckoning, but this was nothing compared to what Albion's defeat might cost him. He looked at George, and the face of his imprudent friend promised nothing agreeable. "Well!" said he, anxiously.

"We are beaten," replied Fougeray, in a hoarse voice "Luck is against me in everything, and the best thing that I can do is to drown myself."

"You are not speaking seriously, I hope?"

"No, my death wouldn't help the matter, and I wish to recover my note at any cost. We still have two days before us. I shall try to turn them to account."

"Had we not better go and see Pinchard? He might perhaps consent to renew, as he promised. I will tell him of my situation, and appeal to his good faith."

"You might as well appeal to a bear. Pinchard has no bowels of compassion, and thinks nothing of breaking his word."

"I suppose not, but by offering him to double the interest——"

"Nothing would do any good," interrupted George, "unless you could bring him your uncle's name as security."

"That is impossible, as you know very well."

"Then you have no resource whatever—no money, no valuables, no credit?"

"No—a thousand times no! And I might ask you this question, as it is you alone who owe this sum. I haven't kept a hundredth part of a franc since I gave you back the two thousand francs which you advanced me,"

"That is true, but you need not remind me of it," said George, somewhat sharply. "If I ask you to help me out of the difficulty I am in it is because in three months' time I shall be in a position to pay, and the only thing is to gain time. I thought that as you owned a good-sized bit of land you might find a notary here who would consent to advance the money on your promise of a mortgage. I know one who does such things without taking much time for inquiries. A telegram to the registrar of mortgages in your district to be sure that there is no mortgage ahead, and——"

"No, no!" interrupted Savinien; "I am already on bad enough terms with my uncle. I don't wish to make him more angry than he is."

"Bad enough terms? Oh yes, about the casket! I'll be hanged if I can understand a word about that matter. I only thought that if that box contains any valuable jewels, as I believe it does, you might pawn them to save us from a protest."

"Who told you that there were jewels in the box?"

"It isn't difficult to guess that from the form and weight of the casket. Yesterday, in changing its place in my safe, I shook it, and I heard a dull sound. Your casket must be full of diamonds."

"What of that? You must know very well that they don't belong to me, and I suppose that you will scarcely advise me to use another person's property."

"No, assuredly not; if I thought of what I just suggested it was because I supposed that they were yours. But let us say no more, and allow me to leave you. I have nothing further to do here, and I have no time to lose looking about me before the fifteenth. All is perhaps not lost. I will see Galipot. I will try what I can at the Bourse to-morrow or the day after. In a word, I will do all I can."

And, without awaiting his friend's reply, George slipped down the side of the mail-coach very dexterously. It was already deserted by the other members of the Plungers' Club, who had gone to look up their friends to talk over the somewhat unexpected result of the great contest.

Savinien remained alone on the roof of the vehicle, and his attention, diverted for a moment by the disappointment which would probably embarrass him to an unheard-of degree, was again fixed upon the carriages and the stands.

The aspect of affairs had changed in the twinkling of an eye. The crowd gathered behind the barrier during the race had scattered like a torrent over the course and among the equipages. The refreshment-stand was besieged by people who had come to drink in honour of their victory, or to console themselves for their defeat with glasses of champagne, which they disputed for. The open space in front of the stands was thronged. The conqueror, the winning horse, had just come up, preceded by police-officers, his bridle held by his trainer, and behind him flocked a compact mass of backers, who were shouting at the pitch of their voice. It was only then that the final decision was given, for if the jockey was not up to weight the result would be annulled, and the second horse would carry the day.

Tristan's partisans, urged on by a dying hope, pressed about the weighing-stand, and anxiously followed the wavering of the needle.

But a loud "all right!" articulated by the bookmakers' messenger, announced that Foxhall was the winner, and trainers and owners re-

treated under the "mushroom," where, in the shade, the incidents of the race and the bets were being discussed. In the midst of this disorder, and owing to this disbanding on all sides, it was difficult for Savinien, who had not left his point of vantage, to see the persons who chiefly interested him.

Most of the spectators having left their places, the land-marks were lost. Only confused clusters were discerned here and there. Carriages were surrounded by news-bearers, who obligingly described the race to the ladies. On the stands there was a bewildering confusion, as in the figures of a cotillon. Blue and red parasols darted about here and there. Everybody was coming and going, mounting or descending. And Savinien was forced to confess that he had lost sight of his uncle and cousin. While he was bestowing the reverse of a blessing upon the temporary excitement which had diverted his attention to the race, he asked himself what he could now do to find M. de Trémorin again. Nothing proved that he had not left Longchamp to return to Paris; for the two races which remained on the card did not constitute the main attraction of the day. The baron cared very little for sport, and if he had appeared at all, it had been for Yvonne's amusement and not to bet.

Savinien, in great distress, turned to look at Madame Montauron, and he succeeded, though not without difficulty, in perceiving the spot where her carriage was stationed among hundreds of others. No one was seated beside her, but the landau was surrounded by people whom Viscount d'Amaulis did not know, or, at all events, whom he did not recognise at the distance at which he found himself.

Nearer, and almost immediately below him, stood Julia Fourcas' open carriage, about to drive away, and from which the Marquis de Laffemas showed no signs of alighting. Over the grass a rider was coming towards the carriages ranged five deep in an endless row, and at sight of him Viscount d'Amaulis started.

"It is that wretch Aparanda," he muttered. "He appears to be looking for some one."

Urged on by anxiety, Savinien now alighted, scarcely knowing which direction he had better take, His main purpose was to find his uncle, and yet he hesitated about doing so till Count Aparanda went off, for the Swede's manner of acting alarmed him. He lost sight of him for a moment, but at last he perceived that the count had begun to walk his horse, and was rising in his stirrups so as to take in at a glance the various rows of carriages.

"He has evidently some evil purpose," said Viscount d'Amaulis to himself, "and if he is looking for any one it can only be for Madame Montauron. If he sees her, he is capable of making a scene, for he is reckless as to consequences, since he intends leaving to-morrow or the day after. Heaven knows what would happen if the husband should come back while he is speaking to her. My duty is to prevent the rascal from going to the carriage. When he knows that the unfortunate woman whom he is persecuting accepts his conditions, he will disappear readily enough, and as soon as I have done with him, I will go into the enclosure and search until I find my uncle."

The first impulse is said to be always the best, and Savinien, who believed this, did not dismiss the generous idea which had abruptly come to his mind. Instead of crossing the course, he turned to the right, and reached Count Aparanda as the latter was alighting and giving the reins to

his groom. It was indeed time for Madame Montauron's champion to interfere.

Savinien hastened forward and spoke to the Swede without the least hesitation. Since the stormy interview which he had had with Count Aparanda at the Plungers' Club, he had never conversed with him. When he had met him in the Allée des Poteaux, the few words exchanged had no relation to Madame Montauron, and when he had seen him at the charity fair in the banker's park, he had not spoken to him at all. As war had been declared between them a month previously, it was out of place to think of polite preliminaries now.

"Where are you going, sir?" asked Viscount d'Amaulis, placing himself resolutely in front of Aparanda.

His appearance was altogether unlooked for by the Swede, who was not, however, disconcerted by it.

"What does that matter to you?" he replied. "Do you wish to pick a quarrel with me?"

"A quarrel! What good would that do? I know very well that you are not a man to fight. I told you what I thought of you in the Bois de Boulogne, and I have waited in vain for your seconds since then."

"It does not suit me to fight about the woman whom I was with then. I have nothing further to say to you; let me pass on."

"To go and insult Madame Montauron? Isn't that your intention?"

"No sir; I must speak with her. I am about to leave Paris, and I absolutely need to see her before I start."

"You shall *not* see her. You can say all that you want to say to her to *me*. She has authorised me to answer you. What have you to say?"

"What have I to say? you know that very well, as this isn't the first time that she has sent you to me. At the club, when you made me certain proposals, I replied by specifying conditions which you did not accept, and we parted without being able to come to terms. It is probable that we shall not agree any better to-day. It is for that reason I wish to speak to Madame Montauron herself. This attempt at a reconciliation will be the last, and it is probable that it will not succeed. However, I don't wish that Madame Montauron should be able to reproach me for not applying direct to her. If she does not see her daughter again the fault will not be mine."

Savinien remained for a moment without speaking. He was abashed by the impudence of this scoundrel, who spoke of a vile bargain as though it had been the most natural thing in the world, and he longed to treat him as he deserved. But he also realised that to break off negotiations with him would be to blast Madame Montauron's last hope, at a moment when it might, perhaps, be realised. Aparanda was about to disappear for ever with the child. There could be no further doubt of that, and it depended upon Savinien to prevent it, and detain him by telling him that the unhappy mother was ready to buy her daughter from him for the price of her diamonds. The great point was to prevent his departure. M. de Trémorin would accomplish the rest.

"You are mistaken," said the viscount, scornfully. "It rests with you to receive the price you demand. I am authorised to tell you so, and I am able to prove it."

"That changes the matter," replied the foreigner at once. "Then Madame Montauron is ready to give me the two hundred thousand francs if I give her——"

"Two hundred thousand francs, or her diamonds, which are worth more," interrupted the viscount.

"But which she cannot dispose of as they are, so you yourself told me, in a casket which you unluckily deposited at the Provincial Bank, and which you dare not take away."

"I have taken it away."

"Then it is in your rooms?" asked Count Aparanda, with strange eagerness.

"No, sir," coldly replied Savinien, "it is not in my rooms, and I——"

"If you gave it back to Madame Montauron you did wrong," interrupted the count, "for it may fall into the hands of her husband, who suspects the truth, and must be watching her."

"I did not give it to Madame Montauron; I have confided it to one of my friends."

"Is your friend a safe man?"

"Perfectly so. You know him. It is Monsieur Fougeray."

"That is different. I am easy, then, and we can treat together. But, before anything else, I must tell you that I insist upon seeing the diamonds."

"You shall see them."

"Very well. But who will be charged with selling them? You or me?"

"Neither you nor me. You will have to deal with some one who will have full power to regulate the conditions of the exchange. It will be an exchange; do not forget that. You will not receive the sum till you give back the child, and the letters which, you say, are in the huge chest deposited by you at the Provincial Bank."

"It is understood, on one condition."

"What is that?"

"I wish, first of all, to know the name of the person who will act as Madame Montauron's representative?"

"What does the name matter to you?"

"It matters greatly. I am not disposed to treat with the first person who presents himself, and take him into the secret of my private affairs."

"I did not know that you had such scruples. You told me all about these matters during the first conversation that I ever had with you."

"That is true; but I did not tell you anything that you did not already know. You were perfectly aware of the truth. It does not suit me to tell it to any one else."

"Even although that person might know it already?"

"That depends upon circumstances," replied the Swede, after a moment's thought. "If the person whom you send to me suits me, I shall not refuse to accept him as an intermediary; but he may not suit me, and if not, I withdraw. It is therefore better, so as to avoid useless trouble, that I should know his name now."

Savinien was silent. He hesitated to name his uncle before making sure that he would undertake the delicate mission with which Madame Montauron wished to charge him.

"Observe that it will be necessary to come to this," resumed Aparanda. "And also remember that I have no time to lose. I wish that all shall be terminated in forty-eight hours. If I thought that the matter would take longer, I would go away from Paris now."

"Well, then," replied Viscount d'Amaulis, "it is probable that you will be obliged to treat with Baron de Trémorin."

"I thought so. That had to be! Monsieur de Trémorin is your uncle, and I suppose that Madame Montauron has no secrets from the friend who formerly arranged her marriage."

"I don't see what reason you can bring forward for not treating with Monsieur de Trémorin. You know him, and he has long known you."

"It is precisely on account of that that the choice of him seems very strange to me. He knew a good many things, but I don't think he knew all, and if Madame Montauron appoints him to represent her, I shall not be able to conceal anything from him, as I must give up the child to him."

"Don t trouble yourself as to that. It is enough if you agree to the interview with my uncle."

"I agree to it. Where will it take place?"

"I cannot tell you now. I must first see Madame Montauron, who will come to an understanding on this point with Monsieur de Trémorin. When this is done I will write to you."

"At the club, if you please. I will call there to-night."

"It isn't certain that I shall be able to make the appointment for to-day"

"So be it, then! I will go to-morrow to the club, and inquire if there is a letter for me. I will even return in the afternoon, but that will be all. I cannot hold myself indefinitely at your disposal."

"Very well; but you can make ready to finish matters promptly—that is to say, to give up Madame Montauron's daughter immediately."

"Immediately? That would be difficult. I told you before that the child is in the country near Paris, but I will find a means."

"Nothing prevents your bringing the letters with you. You have only to take them to-morrow morning from the chest where you say you have concealed them."

"Oh! I don't wish to leave them there in any case. Rely on me: I will do all I can to end matters at once. The diamonds are with your friend Fougeray. It is probably at his rooms that I shall see Monsieur de Trémorin."

"I cannot say," replied Savinien, stiffly. "My uncle will decide that."

"By the bye," said the Swede, with affected indifference, "does Monsieur Fougeray know what the casket which you have left in his hands contains?"

"Why do you ask that?" retorted Viscount d'Amaulis.

"Because, if your friend Fougeray is in the secret of Madame Montauron's affairs, it would be just as well for me to treat with him," replied Count Aparanda. "The fewer persons there are concerned in the matter the better."

"Madame Montauron will do as she pleases about that, and she did not tell me to ask your advice as to the choice of her representative. I can tell you, besides, that Monsieur Fougeray does not know one single word of this story, and that he has not seen the diamonds, for the casket has never been opened in his presence, and he does not possess the key."

"He must know that it contains valuables."

"What of that? Do you assume that he might be capable of abusing a trust?"

"No, certainly not. Monsieur Fougeray is hard pushed, I am told, but that is no reason why he should commit a dishonest act."

"Say no more, then! This conversation has lasted quite long enough!"

"I have no more desire to prolong it than you have. Why should I

since we agree? I have only to await your letter, and I will wait till Tuesday morning."

"You will receive it to-morrow, and I rely upon your abstaining from any steps as regards Madame Montauron herself."

"Oh! now I don't need to see her. And to prove to you that I have no intention of speaking to her here, I will go back to Paris at once. I have had a very successful day, for I have won all my bets so far, and I have not backed any horses in the two races now about to be run. Good day, it isn't probable that we shall meet again."

"I sincerely hope not," muttered Savinien.

Count Aparanda did not appear to hear him. He turned on his heel, and directed his steps to the spot where the groom was holding his restive horse.

Savinien was greatly pleased to see him mount and gallop off. He followed him with his eyes as far as the barrier of the race ground, and even until he had disappeared along the wide, dusty route which leads from Longchamp Hippodrome to the Porte Maillot. Then, re-assured as to the chances of this dangerous enemy's return, Baron de Trémorin's nephew thought only of finding his uncle. And, in truth, it was urgent that he should do so, for he had, as the saying goes, "sold the bearskin before he had slain the bear." He had made a promise to Count Aparanda without knowing how M. de Trémorin would take the matter, or even knowing whether that difficult old gentleman would either consent to hear what he had to say, or to see Madame Montauron; and, should he miss him on the race-course, he might lose a chance that would not again occur.

The excitement which Foxhall's victory had caused had not yet subsided. The vast crowd was flowing forth on every side; it had invaded the course and the space in front of the stands; it had scattered among the vehicles. All classes of spectators were pell-mell together. Members of the Jockey Club were talking to damsels seated in hired victorias, and women of the best society were speaking to bookmakers in a friendly manner about settling day. In the midst of the general confusion Savinien did not know which way to direct his steps, or where to look for those he wished to find. When he had been perched upon the roof of the mail-coach he could have seen in all directions, and he had a mind to return there, but, after a little reflection, he now thought it best to look for Madame Montauron's landau.

It was necessary to inform her of the arrangements into which he had entered with Aparanda. These were conditional, since he had not yet obtained M. de Trémorin's consent, but Madame Montauron might be able to do so. It was for her to ask for it, even if it were necessary, in order to accomplish her purpose, to write a note on the ground, a note which Savinien would take to the Rue du Helder hotel; or in lieu of that she might go with Viscount d'Amaulis to Paris to await the baron's return there.

The question was whether the persons who, an hour before, had been gathered round her carriage were still there, and especially whether her husband had returned from his excursion to the enclosure or elsewhere. Let this be as it might, it was the moment, or never, to try and speak to her.

Savinien threw himself into the midst of the throng. Stealing along so as to avoid Mademoiselle Fourcas' barouche and Anita's victoria, he

crept as best he could among the carriages, horses, and men, and by dint of dodging and elbowing at length came in sight of the vehicle in which he had left the banker's wife.

The circle which had been formed around the landau some time before no longer barred the way to Madame Montauron's truest friend. The gentlemen whom Savinien had seen from the roof of the mail-coach had scattered one by one. However, the lady was not alone. One talker remained, whom the viscount recognised from afar, although he only saw his back. This was M. Bouret, who, after buzzing about among "the irregulars," had now seen fit to come and speak to his partner's wife. It might be seen by his gestures that he was endeavouring to be very entertaining, and from her face that he was not successful. Savinien took in the situation at a glance. He would greatly have preferred not to meet this inevitable bore, but he resolved to approach the carriage all the same.

It was evident that Bouret was not there for his own pleasure, but was going through a performance which duty required of him, and that he would be only too glad to be released from an unpleasant task, and yield his place to a new-comer. Savinien had now no choice in the matter, for M. Montauron might appear at any moment. He therefore made up his mind and walked straight to the carriage.

Madame Montauron was not surprised at seeing him return without M. de Trémorin, and M. Bouret welcomed him warmly. "What! viscount! is it you?" he cried. "I was looking everywhere for you, and I couldn't find you at all."

"Monsieur d'Amaulis was probably on the stand with his uncle," said Madame Montauron.

She saw in Savinien's face that something had upset the plan they had made, and she only mentioned the uncle in order to give the nephew an opportunity of explaining his mishap.

"No, madame," he replied, "I could not find him."

"Monsieur de Trémorin?" said Bouret. "You were too late; he has gone."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Perfectly sure. Just now I was behind the stands, and I saw him with my own eyes get into a cab with his daughter, one of those little open victorias which strangers hire when they go to see the Paris sights. I bowed to him, and the worthy baron must have been in a hurry to return home, for he did not take time to return my bow."

Viscount d'Amaulis and Madame Montauron exchanged a glance.

"That is what it is to live in the country," said the under-manager. "Monsieur de Trémorin, who is one of our greatest capitalists, takes a cab by the day like a mere village notary. I mentioned this eccentric way of acting to Montauron, and he could not get over it."

"Have you seen my husband?" asked the banker's wife.

"Yes, madame. He is in the enclosure, and does not seem to think of leaving it, He is walking about there with some gentlemen who are unknown to me and who do nothing but come and go—'racing men' I suppose, trainers, perhaps, as they don't look very stylish. Perhaps he is questioning them, which would surprise me greatly, as it is the first time that my dear partner ever bothered his head about the races. Shall I send him to you, madame? I am just going to see what are the odds about Fataliste in the Prix Vaublanc, which they are going to run, and Montauron must be near the bookmakers now."

"Thank you, sir, don't give yourself that trouble. I shall remain till the end. And, since you have your own interests to look after, I will not detain you. If I make up my mind to look for my husband Monsieur d'Amaulis will be kind enough as to offer me his arm."

"Then I shall have no scruple in taking advantage of the permission you so graciously give me," replied Bouret, with a touch of sarcasm. And he went off, after bowing with the utmost politeness.

"Speak, sir! What has happened?" demanded Madame Montauron as soon as she found herself alone with Viscount d'Amaulis. "Has your uncle refused to come?"

"No, madame," replied Savinien, shaking his head. "I could not get near him. I was prevented from crossing the race-course. He has now left, and if I go to his hotel he will not receive me. There is but one way of seeing him. You must go to Paris; he will see *you*. I will procure a cab."

"Can you think of such a thing? How can I do so? It would be the same as to confess to my husband that——"

"You can find some excuse this evening for having gone," interrupted Savinien. "Say that you were suddenly indisposed, or whatever you like, but I swear to you, madame, there is not a moment to be lost. Aparanda has just told me that he will not wait any later than to-morrow. I told him that my uncle would see him, and he is ready to treat with him. After to-morrow it will be too late."

Madame Montauron turned pale but did not hesitate. "Call one of my footmen," said she to Savinien, and then, as the servant came up she added: "François, if Monsieur Montauron comes back before I do, say that I have gone to take some refreshments with Viscount d'Amaulis."

VIII.

The rooms which M. de Trémorin occupied in the Rue du Helder were not in the same part of the hotel as those where Savinien d'Amaulis had spent so eventful a week.

The nephew had contented himself on his arrival with two rooms on the third floor overlooking the courtyard; the uncle, however, engaged a complete suite with a parlour, dining-room, two bed-rooms, with a dressing-room to each, besides an additional apartment without any special use and of which he had made a smoking-room. The peasant girl who waited upon Yvonne de Trémorin lodged upstairs.

Whatever M. Bouret's views on the matter might be, the baron knew how to do things handsomely, and although he had taken a cab to go to the races, it was solely because he had not yet had time to set up any sort of establishment; for he was not avaricious, and intended to live in good style in Paris.

He even thought of buying some furniture, as he meant to remain in the capital for a whole year, but this plan was not to the taste of his daughter, who did all she could to dissuade him from it; however, the baron was very obstinate when he made up his mind to anything. Poor Yvonne grew sadder and sadder. All her dreams of happiness were fading away one by one. She despaired of ever seeing Plouër or Savinien again, for M. de Trémorin for several days past had been very strict in his orders that his nephew should not be admitted. Yvonne spent hours

in solitude and tears, and it was all that she could do to refrain from weeping when she went out with her father, who began to give her but little rest. There was nothing all the time but visiting, introductions to strangers, and dining in town: just so many annoyances to Yvonne, who did not like anything but life in the open air, and took no pleasure in showing herself in fine dresses in the ceremonious drawing-rooms of her relations of the aristocratic faubourg. She was neither coquettish nor vain, and the compliments paid to her beauty and intelligence did not console her for being deprived of the dear companion of her childhood, her beloved Savinien, whom M. de Trémorin persisted in banishing, without clearly explaining his reasons for doing so.

On the morning of the Grand Prize of Paris Yvonne had been agreeably surprised when her father had proposed to take her to Longchamp, not because she cared to see the races, but because something told her that Savinien would be there, and she thought that he would find some means of approaching his uncle on this neutral ground. From that to making peace there would be but a step. She believed this, be it as it might, for she did not admit that Savinien could really be in the wrong. This day, however, which was to end in a painful disappointment, had brought nothing but sorrow to Yvonne. She had just returned, heavy-hearted, to the rooms where her cousin was not admitted, and instead of trying on one of her new dresses, she seated herself in a melancholy attitude at the end of the smoking-room, which her father only entered when he wished to indulge in a cigar after breakfast.

She had placed some books there, and an album filled with photographs, which she often opened to look at Savinien's portrait. M. de Trémorin, coming in, found her contemplating this likeness, which did not fill the place of the original, but which unceasingly brought him before her, and he could not restrain his annoyance at the sight.

"I find you at that foolishness again," said he angrily; "you will never give over conjuring up your recollections of the past! It is really too childish, and that young man doesn't deserve that you should trouble your head about him. Besides, it is five o'clock, and we have to dine with Madame de Loudinières. You have just time enough to get ready. Jeannette is waiting for you, and I wish you to look well. Our cousin has invited all her friends to do you honour. You must make a good impression, and not look like a little country-girl."

"I don't wish to please any one," murmured Yvonne.

"You may as well say that you wish to vex me," replied M. de Trémorin, who was becoming more and more irritated. "You are aware that I wish you to marry, and that Madame de Loudinières is on the look-out for a suitable match for you. Let me tell you, since you still pout, that she has found a very charming young man for you, who will be at her house this evening, and will be introduced to you."

"Not this evening, father, for I am really ill, and shall not go out."

"Ah! is that what you say? You are foolishly in love with your cousin, and you imagine that you can marry him in spite of me. Well, then! you oblige me to tell you some things which I wished to spare you."

"What has he done, father?" demanded Yvonne, with anguish in her heart.

"I would rather not tell you, but I must do so, for it will cure you of a foolish infatuation. I should not be forced to it, however, if you had any common sense left. Haven't you any eyes? Didn't you see him during

the races perched upon the roof of a mail-coach, among a disreputable set of fellows! Do you think that he wouldn't have come to chat with us if he didn't feel that he does not deserve to be spoken to, and that he no longer belongs to us?"

"But, father," said Yvonne, "when we saw him on the roof of the coach the Grand Prize was about to be run, and the course had just been cleared. He couldn't pass. If the course had been free he would have come to us."

"He ought to have come earlier, then, or later," grumbled M. de Trémorin.

"Earlier! You forget, father, that he did not know where we were. I am certain that he must have been looking for us for a long time when he saw us from the roof of the mail-coach. How could he guess that you had tickets for the enclosure instead of being in a carriage on the other side of the course? He has not seen us for nearly a week now. You have closed your doors to him."

"I have no intention of opening them again. I have been told that he has been prowling about this hotel under pretext of inquiring for me. This persecution must cease, or I will know why, and that very soon."

"The 'persecution' you speak of clearly shows that if he did not speak to you at Longchamp it wasn't his fault. The course was scarcely clear when you took me away. If we had not returned to Paris so hastily he would have found us."

"That is precisely what I wished to avoid."

"Then don't accuse him of neglect. He is perhaps looking for us at this very moment."

"Well, let him look! It will do him good."

"You are very harsh as regards him," murmured the young girl, in a husky voice.

"You make me too angry altogether," said M. de Trémorin on hearing this. "I tell you, once for all, that this young man is leading a most reprehensible life, and that he associates with very improper people, and is compromising himself by very objectionable conduct. Don't force me to say more."

"Objectionable conduct?"

"I use these words rather than plainer ones. If I gave you a full account of his conduct, you would confess that I behave rightly in breaking off with him. It wasn't pleasant for me to do so, and I hoped that he would clear himself, but he hasn't."

"You would not listen to him."

"It would do no good. Besides, if I refused to listen to him, I didn't prevent him from explaining matters by letter, and he has taken good care not to do that. I received a note from him merely asking me to receive him. I declined. It would have been an idle interview, as he did not agree to tell the whole truth. And besides, this young gentleman, my nephew, has gone back to the bad set that compromised him. He is the intimate friend of a good-for-nothing speculator, named Fougeray, whom he never leaves. They came to the races together."

"There is nothing to show that they did. Monsieur Fougeray was his school-fellow at the law-school at Rennes. Savinien can't turn his back on him in Paris; but there is a long way between that and being his intimate friend. If he were his friend I should know it."

"You imagine, then, that your cousin hides nothing from you? You

are really too simple-minded for your age, and if I spoke out I should reveal a nice story. That Savinien of yours tells you just what he chooses. I'll venture to say that he never told you that he had won and lost a hundred thousand francs, and spent a year's income in a month, without counting that he has a lot of debts? I fully expect to see the name of Amaulis in the hands of some lawyer soon, and Heaven grant that his disgrace may go no further than that!"

"If he has any debts he will pay them," answered Yvonne, with remarkable decision of tone. "How do you suppose that he could avoid having some debts? You forced him to come to Paris against his will, and you told him to plunge into society the temptations of which he did not realise. Doesn't his want of experience excuse his faults!"

"Really, mademoiselle," exclaimed M. de Trémorin, half laughing and half angry, "I did not know that you could be so eloquent! You ought to be a lawyer. But you are defending a bad cause, and your special pleading won't induce me to acquit a guilty man. Believe me, my dear Yvonne, Savinien is acting very badly towards me and towards you, which is still worse. He says that he loves you; he thinks, perhaps, that he does love you, but he acts as though you were nothing at all to him."

"What do you mean?" asked Yvonne, turning very pale.

"You must not expect me to speak out. There are certain subjects which a father cannot mention to a daughter."

"Why not? If Savinien has deceived me for some other woman, isn't it better that I should know it? I beg of you not to leave me in doubt, which is more cruel than the worst certainty."

"The certainty will only come too soon."

"You are not sure as yet, then?" exclaimed Yvonne.

M. de Trémorin bit his lip. He began to see that he would not be the winner in this discussion with a girl to whom sincere love, despite her youth, suggested unforeseen arguments, and he didn't wish to go any further in his communications.

"And so," she resumed "you suspect Savinien, and on the strength of mere suspicion you condemn him."

"Listen to me, my dear Yvonne," said M. de Trémorin, gently, "I don't wish to deceive you, and I admit that I haven't any absolute proof that Savinien has deceived you."

"Ah! I knew it very well!" exclaimed the young girl.

"It cost me a great deal to have to believe him guilty. But appearances are very much against him, and so much so, that I have every reason to believe that he is not a fit husband for you. Let it be as it may, it is my duty as a father to take what I know into account, for your happiness is at stake. What would you think of me if I allowed you to engage yourself for your lifetime to a man who might be bound by other ties, illicit, even criminal ties?"

"It is impossible! You forget that Savinien has, so to speak, always been with us. When you sent him to study at Rennes he went there against his will, and as long as he stayed there he never allowed a month to elapse without coming to see us at Plouer, and indeed, he often came twice in a month. It was his greatest delight and his only pleasure."

"It isn't his stay at Rennes that I am talking about."

"Then it must be in Paris that—but no, father, he has been here six weeks, and in every letter he has expressed a desire to return to the

château; he would, indeed, have done so if we had not made this unfortunate trip."

"Unfortunate is a strong term," said the baron half smiling. "I myself don't in the least regret having come here. I have learned things which I should never have known otherwise, and I am probably not at the end of my discoveries. These discoveries greatly concern your future, and I am determined to carry them to the end. Now, my dear daughter, I am going to speak openly to you, and when I have spoken, without shocking you or compromising a fellow about whom you need no longer trouble yourself, I will make you judge of the situation. Savinien d'Amaulis is the son of my well-beloved sister, who left him to me when she died. I have always treated him as though he had been my own son. I have taken care of him from his earliest childhood, and have never ceased to feel the tenderest affection for him, and until recent times I always thought that he deserved it."

Yvonne started, but said nothing. It was easy to see from her manner that she had made up her mind to hear all.

"Why shouldn't I admit," said M. de Trémorin, "that having thought over all the reasons for and against this marriage, I resolved to subject your mutual attachment to a final test? If Savinien proved unworthy I spared both of you bitter regret. However, I now come to the most trying part of the explanation as to what has occurred, and I beg of you to listen to me attentively. Chance has shown me that Savinien is mixed up in an intrigue in which a woman plays the principal part. Of that I have positive proof, and he does not deny it. How has he become mixed up in this affair? I asked him that, and while protesting his innocence he refused to give a clear and lucid explanation. He declared that the secret was not his own, and that he was not free to tell it to me even for his own justification."

"Wasn't he, as a gentleman, called upon to do that?"

"Perhaps so, but the matter is complicated by a circumstance which shows me that he did not speak truly. He begged me to see the lady herself, and he said that she would tell me what he could not explain. I must tell you that I not only know this lady, but I am on such terms with her that she could speak plainly to me. I went to her house, and this lady, who had always been on the most friendly footing with me, refused to see me. Her servants said that she was ill, and I know for a fact that she is quite well."

"Is it on the strength of that circumstance alone that you accuse Savinien of falsehood?"

M. de Trémorin was about to make a sharp rejoinder to this abrupt question, which wounded his pride as a father, when Jeannette, the maid, came in with an air of embarrassment.

"There is a lady, sir," she stammered, "a lady who wishes to speak to you."

"Did you ask her name?"

"Yes, sir."

"And she would not give it, I suppose! Send her away. It must be some adventuress or other."

"She told me that her name was Madame Montauron."

"Madame Montauron?" exclaimed M. de Trémorin, rising hastily. "That is impossible! You must be mistaken! Is she tall, with a pale complexion and black eyes? Is she alone?"

"Yes, sir, but I think some one is waiting for her down stairs, for she seemed to be in a hurry, and there is a cab in the street at the hotel door."

"Usher her into the parlour, and tell her that I will come to her," replied M. de Trémorin, after striding up and down the room for a moment, watched with intense anxiety by Yvonne.

"Does this visit annoy you, papa? I thought that you were Madame Montauron's oldest and best friend. We have not seen her for some days, and it is quite natural that she should call on us."

"Her coming to see me relates to an important matter, and I must see her at once."

"Will you allow me to go with you to receive her?"

"No! You must stay in this room. Don't leave it on any account until I come to you. Madame Montauron, no doubt, wishes to speak to me of things which are not meant for you to hear."

"Am I never to know what all this means?" asked Yvonne, eagerly.

"Try to calm yourself in my absence," answered the baron, "for when I come back I shall be obliged to speak plainly, and you will be forced to listen." With these words, M. de Trémorin, leaving Yvonne to her own reflections, crossed the dining-room and entered the sitting-room.

The young girl had not guessed everything that there was reason to suppose, but she felt that her fate was about to be decided; her father had told her enough to prove that Madame Montauron was going to speak to him about Savinien, and she hoped that the innocence of the viscount would now be clearly established. How the banker's wife came to be mixed up in the matter, and what part she played in it, Yvonne scarcely dared to think, but she felt sure that Savinien was quite blameless.

"If I could but see him," she thought, "he would tell me all. I am sure that he loves me, and me alone. His lips told me so when he left Plouër, and his eyes have told me the same since we met again here, and neither can have spoken falsely."

At this moment a slight rustle made her turn her head—Savinien stood before her.

"You!" she exclaimed, rising and going quickly towards him. "My heart was not in error. I knew that you would come!"

Savinien took both of Yvonne's hands in his, and, kissing her brow, said in a voice choked by his tears: "I have suffered deeply!"

"So have I, but you have come at last! All our sorrows will be at an end. You will see my father?"

"Your father does not know that I am here. I came in without saying what room I was looking for, or I shouldn't have been allowed to come up. Jeannette had orders not to admit me. However, I spoke to her in such a way that she let me come in, and I do not intend to conceal myself from my uncle. I shall not go away without seeing him; but I wished first of all to speak to you."

"My father has gone to receive Madame Montauron."

"It was I who brought her here."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone. Fortunately, her husband was not with her when I met her at the races. She has come at the risk of seriously compromising herself, of ruining herself, perhaps, to explain everything."

"Then it was to her that my father alluded when he told me——"

"What has he told you? Things that a young girl ought not to know? No—that is impossible!"

"He told me that you had refused to give up a woman's secret, and I said that I approved of your course. He said nothing more, except that you had deceived me."

"You did not believe that?"

"Not for a moment; but to listen to him——"

"You would think me guilty? He believes me so, or he would not behave as he does towards me, or accuse me of a fault of which I am not guilty."

"Why should he pretend to be so angry with you if he isn't really so? He admitted just now that he had intended to allow us to marry, but he said that his ideas on the subject had changed."

"Yes, a few days ago; and if you knew, Yvonne, upon what he founds this change—proofs that are not proofs, which he has not seriously inquired into, or allowed me to show him the absurdity of. Madame Montauron, who could have convinced him that he was in the wrong, has been prevented from seeing him, and he supposed that she was trying to avoid him. But as soon as she knew to what trials I was subjected for refusing to break a promise I had made to her, she did not hesitate to come here, and I brought her with me at once. She will tell my uncle everything, and then he will be unable to continue keeping me away."

While Savinien was thus speaking, Yvonne's paleness betrayed her emotion, and it was easy to see that she was not so much at ease as he was. She did not dare to ask any further questions, for her woman's instinct warned her to avoid venturing upon delicate ground.

"Do you doubt me?" exclaimed Savinien, surprised and troubled by her silence.

"No," she murmured, "I have faith in you, and I do not fear the decision which my father will arrive at when he knows everything. He alone has a right to speak now, and I do not ask to know more. But should he persist in his present determination, I wish to say to you that I shall never marry any one but you."

"I should die of grief if he forbade our marriage! I love you with my whole soul, Yvonne, and I am still worthy of your love, although I have done wrong——"

"Wrong!" repeated the young girl, trembling.

"Yes, and I must tell you in what. When I came to Paris I allowed myself to mix with people whom I ought to have fled from. I can in one word say that they were repugnant to me."

"But why did you frequent such people as the associates of George Fougeray when you had the blessed medal which I gave you still about your neck? It was given to me by a naval officer, a friend of father's, who brought it from the Holy Land. You have lost it, no doubt?"

"Lost it! It is here upon my heart. Look!" exclaimed the lover, drawing a silken cord from under his waistcoat. The medal hung from it, and his gesture in drawing it forth had been so eager, so impassioned, and yet so unaffected, that the young girl blushed with joy.

"Will you believe me," said Savinien, warmly, "when I tell you that not a day has passed since I left you when I have not kissed it ten times with thoughts of you?"

"Even on the days when Monsieur Fougeray took you into the bad company he enjoys so much?" said Yvonne, smiling.

"Yes, and it was this talisman which prevented any evil from befalling me among these worthless companions."

"Is it true that it protected you? My father says that it did not."

"Your father is mistaken? I had no great merit in resisting temptations that were not temptations."

"Was the woman who came so strangely dressed to the fair, and who was at the races to-day, one of these persons?"

"Yes. Since I have sworn to hide nothing from you—and I have sworn so to myself—I must confess that I once accompanied George Fougeray to a card-party at her house, at which I lost a large sum of money, but it was paid with what I had made at the Bourse; how, I will tell you at some future time."

"My father declares that you have impaired your fortune."

"He is wrong. I am no richer than when I left Plouër, but I am no poorer, or not much."

"He says that you have debts."

"No. None of my own exist, but it is true that I am responsible for another person, and that if he does not pay I shall be forced to do so in his place. I have made a great mistake, but I had not the courage to refuse a friend."

"George Fougeray, was it not?"

"He was in a pitiable plight. He absolutely needed a certain amount, and could not obtain a loan on his own signature. He asked me to lend him my name."

"And you did so? That was like just you!"

"Then you do not blame me for having saved my schoolfellow?"

"No, if he is an upright man, and, since you have not broken off with him, I believe him to be so."

"A man may be upright and yet be poor. George thought that he would be able to meet the note. The resources upon which he relied have failed him, and the person who holds the bill will come to me."

"When?"

"On the fifteenth of June, which is Wednesday next. In three days, as this is Sunday, I shall be asked to pay forty-three thousand francs!"

"Ah, what a sum!—almost a fortune! What will you do?"

"I shall borrow some money on my farm at Trigavon."

"If my father finds that out, he will say that you are on the road to ruin."

"If he says that, he will only say what is true. When I have paid the money-lender, I shall barely have enough to live on."

"What does that matter, as I shall be your wife?" said Yvonne with the utmost simplicity.

"You talk like a child, as you are. In the first place it is not certain that my uncle will give his consent to our marriage, and if I fancied that he thought I regarded it as a speculation I would——"

"Say no more!" interrupted the young girl. "My father may be angry, but he knows you too well to attribute such paltry motives to you; and if he is angry I will quiet him by showing him that you erred through generosity and are the victim of your good heart."

"Some one is coming," said Savinien, who, while talking, had been listening to the sounds wafted from outside. "I heard a door open."

"It is the sitting-room door."

"It is in the sitting-room that he received Madame Montauron, is it not?"

"Yes, he is showing her out, no doubt, and if the interview is over he

will certainly come here, for when he left me he told me not to stir till he returned."

"Well, then, let him come! I am ready to see him."

"But he does not expect to find you here; and if he does find you who knows how he will take it? If I warned him it would be better."

"Don't do so! Madame Montauron is with him, beyond a doubt, and he would not like you to show yourself while she is here. I hear them crossing the dining-room."

"Yes, the staircase door is being opened softly—Madame Montauron has gone and the door has closed again."

"You see that it is too late. I hear my uncle's step; he is coming; don't be frightened; let me speak!"

At this moment the baron entered, and seeing his nephew, exclaimed: "Ah! you are here. What are you doing here? You know very well that some one is waiting for you."

"No," replied Savinien, without the least embarrassment. "Madame Montauron is not waiting for me, and it is better that she should return home alone."

"Madame Montauron! I think that it is very bold of you to mention her name before your cousin. Have you been taking upon yourself to tell her——"

"Savinien," interrupted Yvonne, "has been telling me that he had been slandered, and that Madame Montauron came here to clear him. That is all he told me."

"Well and good! But I have some questions to ask him, and I wish you to leave us."

"Very willingly, as I am sure that you will call me back before long," replied Yvonne, who had at once seen, from her father's face, that the storm had passed by. Her heart was once more full of hope.

The baron took her by the hand, led her into the dining-room, returned, and bolted the door, "You will admit," said he, to Savinien, "that for a month past you have done nothing but commit one act of folly after another."

"Acts of folly which no egotist would have committed, however," replied Viscount d'Amaulis, with warmth.

"That may be: but you have placed yourself and me in a very bad position."

"And you?"

"Yes, indeed! How can I look Montauron in the face again, after having deceived him in such an unworthy manner?"

"But he is not aware that such is the case."

"But do you imagine that my conscience does not reproach me for having brought about this marriage? I had no idea of the existence of that child, still I ought to have made full inquiries before advising a worthy man to marry as I did. In reality, it is now my duty to go to him and confess everything."

"But it would be condemning the daughter of your best friend to death. He would kill her."

"He would, undoubtedly, and thanks to you, I am caught in a trap from which I shall not escape without a deal of trouble. To save this woman, I am obliged to become her accomplice."

"You will save her, will you not?"

"I shall try, although the task is very repugnant to me. But if I take

part in it, I shall do so in my own way. From this day forward the matter no longer concerns you."

"That is all I ask."

"But you must tell me everything. In the first place, is it certain that Montauron did not see you go away with his wife, and follow you?"

"It is perfectly certain. There was no one in the street when I entered the hotel," said Savinien.

"The cab is no longer there," said Monsieur de Trémorin, looking out of the widow. "Let us hope that she will reach home safely. Now, what have you accomplished with this man, Aparanda? Madame Montauron told me that he would only allow you till to-morrow, and that she is ready to give up her diamonds, if he will restore her daughter and her letters. She told me no more as to what has been done in the matter, but you have seen him. What has been arranged between you?"

"That I should write to him as soon as possible to give him an appointment."

"With me?"

"Yes. I hoped that after seeing Madame Montauron you would consent to treat with this miserable wretch on her behalf."

"I consent to see him, and will treat him as I see fit. I have not yet made up my mind to hand the diamonds over to him. But, first of all, you must give me the casket. Let us go to your rooms."

"It is not there."

"How is that"

"I left it with George Fougeray for him to keep it for me."

"What!" exclaimed M. de Trémorin, "have you left two hundred thousands francs' worth of diamonds in the hands of that stock-jobbing Bohemian? You have a strange way of placing your confidence, I must say."

"I assure you, uncle, that Fougeray is incapable of abusing my trust," exclaimed Savinien, energetically, "and I declare to you that the diamonds are much safer in his rooms than in mine, for he has an iron safe to keep them in while I have only some drawers. Besides, I could not carry the casket home with me without being seen by Monsieur Montauron, whom I suspected of having gone to wait near my door for my arrival. Indeed, when I reached home, I saw that the door-keeper was keeping a look-out."

"Montauron is watching you, then? I thought so. His wife tells me that she does not in the least understand the way in which he acts. He never speaks of her diamonds, and lives with her on the same terms as ever, but isolates her completely. All visitors are told that she is ill."

"But he took her to the races to-day."

"And made a show of leaving her alone in the carriage. I should not be surprised if he had been watching her all the while, and it is not clear yet whether you won't have some trouble with him. But this isn't the question. The diamonds must be given in exchange for the child, and I must have the casket. Madame Montauron has just handed me the key. I suppose that Monsieur Fougeray will make no difficulty about giving the coffer to me upon a word from you."

"Certainly not."

"Well, as I don't care to receive that knight of the Bourse here, write to him this evening to say that I will call at his house to-morrow at eleven. I don't wish to detain him during Bourse hours. And let Count

Aparanda know that I will see him to-morrow at noon. He lives at the Grand Hôtel, does he not?"

"He did at one time, but I don't know whether he is still lodging there. It would be better to give him an appointment elsewhere."

"Good! This fine gentleman has no fixed abode. That is all that was wanting to complete the picture! Where shall you direct your letter?"

"To his club, the Plungers."

"Oh, yes, that gambling-house which you were admitted to. That is another fine thing you did. But no matter! Tell him that I will call for him to-morrow, at noon, at this sham club. I may just as well do so as I have begun to associate with such people."

"He will be there, for he promised to call this evening for my letter."

"Sit down, then. There are writing materials on the table. Write, but be concise: 'Baron de Trémorin will present himself to-morrow, between twelve and one.' Not a word more."

Savinien did as he was bidden, and also penned a few lines to George Fougeray. "I will take the note to Aparanda and return in a moment," he said rising up when he had finished.

"I did not tell you to return," replied the baron.

"Then you have not forgiven me yet?" said Savinien.

"I excuse you to a certain extent. I admit that as regards your connection with Madame Montauron, your conduct has been correct, though you have run great risks. But that does not wipe away all the rest."

"Do you forbid me to hope, then?"

"To hope for what? That I shall allow you to marry Yvonne? This is a nice time for reminding me that I once had views which I no longer have and cannot entertain," replied the baron, opening the door.

"You drive me away, then!" exclaimed Savinien, in a hoarse voice.

"No! no! We shall soon see one another again, but I restore you your liberty and the management of your little fortune, which you must now attend to yourself. I ought to have done this long ago. I hope that we shall be good friends all the same."

"I can call here then as I used to do."

"Didn't I say so? Let me tell you what will be the end of the matter I am managing. When I have finished with Aparanda, I shall go back to Plouër. I shall not close my door to my sister's son; but just now you must go and carry war into Sweden."

Yvonne half opened the sitting-room door, but her father signed to her to retreat, and led Viscount d'Amaulis on to the landing, Savinien went down the stairs, sad, but not without hope.

IX.

After the defeat of Albion, George Fougeray went away from the races in despair. He had just staked his last card, and had lost. It was utter ruin that had befallen him, for he had not told Savinien all. He had been going from one disaster to another ever since the beginning of the month. Each day had deepened the gulf opened by a bad speculation on 'Change. And, as on 'Change everything is known, his credit was all falling to pieces. His Ottoman stock was held by Galipot, who now exacted security when operating for him. There was no more political news for him to take advantage of, Rheinthal being absent. It was said that his illustrious

patron had given him a financial mission in Germany, and that he would not be back for a long time. And, to crown all these misfortunes, the note held by Pinchard was now on the point of falling due.

Had it not been necessary to meet this fatal note on the 15th of June, Fougeray might still have held out. There are ways of managing matters with brokers, and Galipot had no interest in crushing an unfortunate companion in speculation, who had already helped him to earn a deal of money, and might again do so. Galipot might have consented to wait for an arrangement of his difficulties, and the proverb: "Whoever does not owe on pay-day is safe," is as applicable at the Bourse as anywhere else.

Savinien alone could help him out of his difficulties by applying to his uncle, but Savinien appeared little disposed to try this. The viscount would, no doubt, end by paying when he was forced to do so, but Fougeray would be past redemption before this was done.

Fougeray now asked himself whether he would not do as well to see the Baron de Trémorin himself, so as to tell him that it would be wisest to rescue Viscount d'Amaulis at once from the clutches of a hard-fisted money-lender, against security from himself — Fougeray—and from Savinien also. This was a bold step, but it offered a chance of success. The great difficulty consisted in approaching this uncle, who seemed so hard to get at, and George pondered as to the chances of this risky venture. While he was thus pondering, Savinien's letter was handed to him.

The way was now open, as the baron was to call on the morrow to take away the casket, and this casket might even serve as an opening for the conversation, for Fougeray suspected that he had an important deposit in his charge, and flattered himself that it would be thought he had taken excellent care of it.

While he was still twisting the note in his fingers it flashed across his mind that this was probably the casket which Savinien had made so much mystery about, and which he had wished him to withdraw from the Provincial Bank vaults. There was evidently something under all this, and Fougeray, by dint of recalling various circumstances to his mind, concluded that the Montaurons were concerned in the matter.

"I also am concerned in it," he thought, "and so is Baron de Trémorin, it appears. I have in hand a deposit of jewels, perhaps letters which compromise some one, and it may be that they compromise Madame Montauron. I should be a fool if I could not, somehow or other, induce the uncle to free his nephew from the debt he owes, and I must do so without abusing my position as a holder of this deposit, though I may take advantage of it to make terms with the baron."

Having thus concluded, George Fougeray felt somewhat reassured, and he was now anxious to interview M. de Trémorin, who might prove his deliverer. He longed for the morrow to come, and he thought that the best thing he could do to calm his impatience would be to take his dinner in the open air in the Champs Elysées, and spend the evening at Mabille. He was not sorry, besides, to appear at that gay place so as to put a stop to any rumours which might be astir as to the state of his affairs. He well knew that in Paris the more a man finds himself cramped the less he ought to show it. However, he but little thought that fresh complications were about to arise from his decision to go out and try to enjoy himself.

At seven o'clock he seated himself before a table at the Café des Ambassadeurs, and drank two bottles of Moët's Brut Impérial, in

presence of two thousand diners of both sexes. This made him a little more lively, and he then proceeded to the Summer Circus, on leaving which, a couple of hours later, he made a joyous entry into Mabille.

Everybody was shoving and shouting, every language was being spoken, and there was even some fighting going on, as was usual, at this ball on the evening of the race for the Grand Prize, when blows were frequently exchanged by men of different nationalities. However, George cared nothing at all about all this. He rushed boldly into the thick of the turmoil, made his way through the crowd, accosted ten fops and twenty "irregulars" of his acquaintance, upset some chairs, broke some lamps, overturned some tables by catching his foot in them, and finally succeeded in securing a position upon the raised platform of the café, so as to be seen and clearly establish the fact that he was having a "good time of it."

To the people who spoke to him he declared that he had won six hundred louis on Foxhall, and that he was going to celebrate his triumph by supping with a party of friends at the Café Anglais.

It is needless to state that he had not the faintest wish to take any supper, and that he required great will-power to play so naturally and easily the part he had undertaken to perform. Moreover, he was not sufficiently under the influence of wine to keep it up for any length of time. So he began to think of going home to bed. He had done what he wished. All the brokers strolling along the promenade had seen him, and could detect no trace of his being a ruined man. This was all he had aimed at, and he was just about to slip back into the crowd and make for the exit, when he saw Count Aparanda coming towards him, borne along by the current which rolled round the circle set aside for dancing.

The meeting was not an agreeable one to George. He had not the least motive for reassuring this individual—whom the members of the Plungers' Club held in little esteem—as to his financial situation. He still felt bitter against him on account of his losses at play. So he made haste to turn his back upon him, and he thought that the Swede would go his way without stopping.

But this was a mistake. Aparanda came up the steps of the café, and with a smiling face approached Viscount d'Amaulis' friend.

"I am glad that I came to Mabille," said he, "as it gives me the pleasure of meeting you here."

"I'm very sorry," said Fougeray in an easy tone, "but I've had enough of all this, and I am going home."

"Don't go till I have spoken to you for a moment. I wish to see you about a matter which concerns you, and I was thinking of calling and seeing you to-morrow morning. But we can talk it all over here."

"I did not come here to attend to business matters," rejoined George; "besides, I don't know what you can possibly have to say to me, or what we can have to talk over, in the way of business. Our affairs, as to what you won of me at cards, were settled long ago, and we have no others to liquidate."

"It isn't that which I wished to speak of. I want to propose to you an operation which would be of great advantage to you."

"And to you, I suppose!" said George, ironically.

"Of course," replied Aparanda, without being in the least disconcerted, "but I declare to you that you are more interested in the matter than I am."

"I doubt that."

"I will prove it to you, if you will be kind enough to sit down with me at that table which is now free, over there at the end of the hall. We cannot talk among all these people without being overheard."

George's curiosity was excited by Aparanda's persistence, and he wanted to know what the Swede could have to say to him.

"So be it," said he, "but pray be brief. Some one is waiting for me."

It was necessary to make haste, for there was a rush for the seats, but fortunately they reached the vacant chairs before those behind them came up. When they were seated in front of one another, and as soon as the waiter had poured out two glasses of what professed to be old brandy, Count Aparanda began as follows: "Don't fly into a passion, I beg you, as I have no intention of offending you. I wish, on the contrary, to be useful to you. So let me remind you that just now you are very short of money."

"That isn't true," exclaimed Fougeray, "and if it were, it wouldn't concern you."

"I grant that. But I have come to offer to adjust your difficulties."

"I repeat that they only exist in your imagination, and that I do not need your good offices."

"I expected that reply. It is only quite natural that you should try to hide your true situation, and that you should mistrust me. But I will be clear. You have a note in Pinchard's hands—a note for forty-three thousand francs, payable June 15th, that is to say, in three days from now."

"How do you know that?" stammered Fougeray, who was now completely disconcerted.

"I know this Pinchard from having formerly borrowed money from him," said Aparanda, "and I am still in some degree engaged in money matters with which he is acquainted. It is always a good thing when one plays a heavy game to have a money-lender at one's disposal. I formerly owed money to him, but now it is he who owes me a somewhat large amount—money which I placed in his hands on coming to Paris, as I did not care to let it lie idle. I am going away, however, and am about to withdraw this money. I have so informed Pinchard, who asked me if it would suit me to take as part-payment of what he owes me a note signed by you, and endorsed by Monsieur d'Amaulis."

"Did you accept?"

"I accepted conditionally. I wished to see you to find out whether you would be ready on Wednesday next. You can well understand that as I am about to leave France I have no time to wait."

Fougeray reflected a moment, and thought that it was better to have even Pinchard as a creditor than to fall into the clutches of a foreigner of suspicious character.

"The note will be paid one of these days," he said, with a careless air, "but not at date. Pinchard promised me that he would renew it. He has broken his word, and I intend to teach him not to make game of me. It will cost me something, no doubt, but I shall have the pleasure of annoying him."

"That is a more expensive pleasure than you may think. The protest will ruin your credit."

"That solely concerns me."

"Very well! but if you could avoid an annoying affair, I think that you would prefer a satisfactory arrangement to no end of trouble."

"Arrangement! Did Pinchard tell you to propose one to me?"

"Perhaps so."

"Explain yourself, then. I will see whether I can accept your offer."

"What I wish to propose is very simple. I will hand you back the note——"

"When I give you forty-three notes of a thousand francs each! This is a joke. I have told you that I don't intend to pay on Wednesday."

"I speak seriously. It depends upon you to free yourself from this debt without paying anything whatever."

"Do you intend, then, to make me a present of two thousand five hundred louis?" said George, with a sarcastic grimace.

"A present! No, not exactly. It will be an exchange."

"An exchange of what? Of acts of politeness?"

"Yes, in a manner. I will free you from your trouble if you will do me a service."

"You make your meaning clear. You have some piece of rascality to propose to me."

This was said with such coolness that the Swede took the reply for a consent beforehand, and did not mince the matter any longer.

"Nothing of the sort," said he, without taking offence at the words which Fougeray had made use of to describe the transaction. "You have only to give me a casket that is in your rooms, and which is of no value to any one but me."

George Fougeray started, and, had he yielded to his first impulse, he would have summarily put a stop to all propositions from Count Aparanda, by treating him as he deserved, and by rising and breaking off the conversation. But Parisian life had spoiled him. It had not deprived him of all moral sense, and he did not for an instant think of selling a friend's secret to the rascal now before him. But the idea came to him of finding out the Swede's own secrets. It was a means of gaining power over him, and he foresaw that by managing matters adroitly he might derive some advantage from the complicated state of things, without having an infamous act on his conscience.

"A casket in my rooms?" said he, feigning astonishment.

"Don't try to deny it. The person who left it in your care told me so."

"Ah, indeed! Did he tell you, besides, what was in the casket?"

"That was unnecessary. I knew it already. What the casket contains belongs to me."

"Then I can understand that you want to have it."

"I very much wish to have it. The proof of that is——"

"The proof of that," interrupted George, "is that you wish to buy it from me at a very high price. But why don't you go to the person who gave it to me to take care of?"

"Because he would refuse to surrender it to me."

"Well, you are certainly frank, I must say! You think that I shall be less scrupulous than he is. I am greatly obliged to you for the opinion which you entertain of me, but I must inform you that you are mistaken. I shan't hand you in exchange for a small sum of money a casket which is undoubtedly worth a great deal more. Supposing that I were unscrupulous enough to accept your proposal, I should be taken in by it."

Aparanda evidently expected a more satisfactory reply, but he did not give up the attempt. "I see," said he, after a moment's silence, "that

I have not sufficiently explained the matter to you, and I will now tell you everything."

"That is the best thing you can do," replied George Fougeray, quietly. "You must understand that I shall make no arrangement with you till I know what I shall be giving you in exchange for my note."

"That is very true," answered Aparanda, eagerly. "You have not opened the casket since it has been in your possession?"

"No, sir. I had an excellent reason for that. I had not got the key."

The Swede's face lighted up. This reply entirely coincided with what Viscount d'Amaulis had told him, and he rightly concluded that Fougeray could not have tampered with the diamonds.

"Well!" he replied, "if you had opened it you would have found inside some letters written by me to a woman, and even a promise of marriage which I was at one time so foolish as to sign. This was a serious error, for—it costs me something to confess this, but I promised to hide nothing from you—at the time when I thus bound myself I was married to a person in my own country. This promise is not worth anything, it must be said, as the woman to whom it was given has married since that time; but you must see how much I wish to destroy this proof of a weakness which I blush for."

"And you would pay forty-three thousand francs for the pleasure of destroying it? That is a high price."

Aparanda felt the thrust and hastily added: "I must, I see, tell you something more. Let me, then, inform you that I had at one time the folly to borrow some money from this woman with whom I was upon a footing which I need not explain, and these letters of mine, which she kept, prove that I still owe her this money. This is because an opportunity to return it to her has been wanting. It is a matter of five hundred louis. I am anxious to bring the affair to an end and to recover my letters. The lady is watched by a very jealous husband, and I cannot treat directly with her. Why shouldn't you be my intermediary? I will give you the five hundred louis——"

"And my note as a remuneration for my care and trouble," interrupted Fougeray. "You are very generous, sir."

"Then, it is agreed and settled."

"No, not even begun, for I don't know to whom I am to hand the five hundred louis, and I am desirous above all things of knowing that."

"To Viscount d'Amaulis, if you please. He will undertake to hand them to the lady."

"Very well! But I must consult him first."

Aparanda bit his lip. He saw that he was blundering, and immediately changed his tactics. "That is just what I don't wish," said he, eagerly. "Monsieur d'Amaulis is very peculiarly situated as regards this lady and as regards me."

"Do you mean to say that he is her lover?"

"Don't oblige me to speak more plainly, I beg of you. Let it suffice for me to say that this afternoon I had a long conversation with Monsieur d'Amaulis at the races, and that we could not agree. It was he who told me that you had charge of the casket, and it was then that it came into my head to apply to you, for you are not under the same influence and you are a practical man."

"What is this lady's name?" abruptly asked George Fougeray.

"Swear to me that it shall remain a secret between us," said Aparanda, feigning hesitation.

"Who the mischief should I tell it to?"

"This lady, then, is one whom you must know. It is Madame Montauron."

"The wife of the director of the Provincial Bank? I only know her by sight."

"You are free, then, to act as you please."

"No; for I know her husband, and I am the friend of Monsieur d'Amaulis, who would never forgive me for meddling with his private affairs."

"He will, on the contrary, be grateful to you for helping him out of a serious difficulty."

"You choose to say that, but I shall wait till he tells me so."

"You refuse, then?"

"Yes, utterly! And I advise you not to insist, as my resolution is firm and won't change. Keep your money; I shall keep the casket till Monsieur d'Amaulis comes for it."

George Fougeray had certainly some merit in replying in this manner, in the desperate position in which he found himself, but, after all, he was only doing his duty. He had understood from the outset what advantage was to be derived from Count Aparanda's confidential communications. He knew that Baron de Trémorin would call on him on the morrow to ask for the casket; he had no doubt but what it contained Madame Montauron's diamonds, and he realised the true aim of Aparanda. The Scandinavian scamp hoped to be able to obtain possession, in exchange for fifty-three thousand francs, of a number of jewels which were undoubtedly worth three or four times as much. George preferred to retain the esteem, and, above all, the gratitude of M. de Trémorin, to recovering his note and receiving ten thousand francs over and above the bargain.

This calculation would prove correct, if Savinien's uncle only believed in George Fougeray's sincerity when he told him the story of the attempt at bribery, and how he had repulsed it. But then the baron did not appear to be a credulous sort of man.

"Sir," said Aparanda, who would not yet give up the point, "your disinterestedness is admirable, but it will have fatal consequences. Madame Montauron has my letters; I have hers; and if I threaten to make use of them, I can soon force her to capitulate."

"That would be abominable black-mail," said George Fougeray, coldly. He no longer cared to qualify his expressions. "You are free to do as you please. But I think that it is as well to tell you that her husband isn't easy to deal with, and that if he thought you were bent upon anything of the kind, you might regret having attacked his honour as a married man. But now I think of it, you have perhaps an idea of selling Madame Montauron's letters to him."

"You are mistaken, sir," replied Aparanda, without flinching. "I shall not sell these letters to any one. I shall simply keep them if Madame Montauron refuses to return me mine. This is what Madame Montauron wishes to prevent at any cost, and the proof of it is that this afternoon she instructed Viscount d'Amaulis to propose an exchange to me; however, there is a condition attached to the offer which I cannot accept. It does not suit me, I repeat, to treat with the viscount, but I am fully disposed to treat with you. It will cost me much dearer, since

I shall hand your note back to you, but at least I shall avoid the annoyance of finding myself with a man whom I greatly dislike. In one word, to show you exactly what I feel, I don't care to treat with my successor in Madame Montauron's affections."

"You display most unlooked-for delicacy of feeling," replied George, in an ironical tone. "Have you so expressed yourself to Monsieur d'Amaulis?"

"There was no need of it. He would not have understood how I felt," retorted the Swede. "He wishes to take an active part in the matter, and he thinks himself called upon to do so because he is young and in love. I might, perhaps, have felt the same at his age. But now-a-days I am practical, and so are you. It is for that reason I have applied to you, and I still hope that we shall end by coming to an understanding."

George Fougeray, without departing from his bantering and indifferent manner, listened very attentively to all this, and began to understand his adversary's purpose. Savinien had never spoken to him about Madame Montauron's letters, but it was probable that they really existed, that they were in Aparanda's hands, and that Madame Montauron particularly desired to buy them back.

Fougeray, who was very intelligent, already guessed that the diamonds were the ransom, and that M. de Trémorin, who would call on the morrow to take the casket away, was the intermediary appointed by the lady to take Savinien d'Amaulis' place. Thus Count Aparanda's perfidious plot now appeared very clear to him. The Swede feared M. de Trémorin's intervention and had made up his mind to make a sacrifice to obtain possession of the diamonds, and intended to disappear as soon as he had them, merely leaving a part of Madame Montauron's letters behind him, and keeping the rest to use against her at a later period.

M. de Trémorin, who probably knew how many letters had been written in all, would be less easy to deceive. He would, undoubtedly, drive a hard bargain, and even threaten to hand the accomplished black-mailer over to the police. Now, it was well worth the Scandinavian's while to get rid of all these possible difficulties by a large payment of money.

"This scoundrel thinks that I am no better than he is," said George Fougeray to himself. "But I will show him that he is not able to get the better of me, and I shan't be driven to commit an infamous act to get my note out of his or Pinchard's clutches. The baron wouldn't, perhaps, have believed me on my word if I had boasted to him of having refused the presents of this low-bred Artaxerxes, but he will come to my rooms to-morrow morning, and he must believe his eyes and ears. When he has seen and heard everything, he can no longer doubt my disinterestedness. I mustn't now discourage the Swede; I must get him to bring me Madame Montauron's letters to-morrow."

"Well, sir," said Count Aparanda, "have you reflected? Shall we end this matter to the satisfaction of all parties, or will you force me to make use of other means to obtain restoration of what belongs to me? I should regret being driven to such measures, but ——"

"My answer is this," interrupted George, "I am but little inclined to give up to you a casket which has been confided to me, but what you have just told me changes the situation; and if you really possess letters written to you by Madame Montauron, I may consent to an exchange."

"That is what I ask."

"You must show me these letters. Where are they?"

"In the vaults of the Provincial Bank. On the day when I deposited them I met Monsieur d'Amaulis, whom I did not know, there. He on his side, had come to deposit Madame Montauron's letters."

Fougeray immediately remembered that Savinien had spoken of this meeting, and he concluded that what Aparanda now said was true. "Then," said he, "you must take them out and bring them to me. Without them I won't give up the casket. You give and I give."

"That is just. But there is a difficulty. I have reason to believe that Monsieur Montauron is watching me. He does not know everything, but he is not ignorant of the fact that I formerly courted his wife. That is why I don't wish to go to the Provincial Bank in person. But you could go in my place."

George Fougeray had not forgotten that Savinien also had proposed to him to go and remove a casket from the vaults, and he was not a little surprised to hear Aparanda propose something similar.

"How could I take out a deposit made in your name?" he asked.

The Swede now entered into explanations similar to those which Savinien had given, and in reply George Fougeray raised absolutely the same objections as he had made to his friend. He ended by insisting that the letters should be taken out of the vaults by the Swede, and brought to his rooms. "When I have seen the letters we may be able to come to an agreement," he added. "Until then I say nothing."

Aparanda did not evince any haste in replying. He was reflecting, and it was clear that these conditions greatly annoyed him. His plans were, undoubtedly, upset; however, to get possession of the diamonds he was prepared for a sacrifice.

"Remember," said he, "that I have no time to lose. I wish to end this matter to-morrow morning, and the Provincial Bank does not open till nine."

"The Avenue de l'Opéra is quite close to the Rue d'Antin where I live, and I will wait for you till noon. You can, therefore, if you like, take the box, in which you keep Madame Montauron's letters, home, remove the packet, and bring it to me between eleven o'clock and noon," said Fougeray, who remembered that the hour for the appointment with the baron was eleven. "I have only that hour free in the morning."

"I shall be punctual, and hope that we shall promptly finish the matter."

"You will find that I shall have the casket all ready on my table."

"Very good! Then with the letters I will give you the ten thousand francs which I owe to Madame Montauron. As for Pinchard's note, I don't insist on the point, as, through an excess of delicacy, you do not want me to return it to you, but, if you change your mind, you have only to speak, as it will be in my pocket-book."

"Bring it, at all events," said George, with an air of indifference. Meantime, he watched Aparanda's face and saw that it changed. The scoundrel did not believe in the openness of others. He judged them by himself, and he had had doubts as to Fougeray's intentions when the latter refused to receive the price of the treacherous act which he wished him to commit, and had thought that George's disinterestedness hid some trap. Now, however, he considered that he was dealing with a man as unscrupulous as he was himself, and no longer feared anything, but felt sure of coming into possession of the diamonds. He even regretted

having offered so large a bribe, and thought that he might have been able to obtain them at a lower figure.

Fougeray's final reply had been a master-stroke, and to leave it unimpaired, he now rose. "We agree, then," said he; "I must leave you, with your permission."

"Until to-morrow morning," replied Aparanda. "That interview will be our last, as all my preparations for departure are made, and I shall leave Paris to-morrow evening."

"I won't detain you, I beg of you to believe it," replied Fougeray, who was anxious to leave the place, and soon disappeared in the crowd. He was longing to return home, but he did not regret his visit to Mabille, for he was delighted with what he had accomplished.

"Madame Montauron will owe me a great many thanks," thought he, as he hastened towards the exit. "She will have her letters, and will, perhaps, retain her diamonds. The Swede will give in if Monsieur de Trémorin shows his teeth, and I shall have an indisputable claim upon the gratitude of the nobleman from Brittany. After hearing what he will hear in my rooms, he can't have the heart to refuse to pay Pinchard's note."

George Fougeray was not wrong in congratulating himself, for there was a certain justice in his calculations. They were wrong in but one point, which was unknown to him. He could not guess that there was a child in the case, and that the lady whom Baron de Trémorin was defending cared more about recovering her daughter than about regaining possession of her letters.

X.

On the morrow after his visit to the Mabille, George rose early, took a cup of chocolate, and dressed himself in the same style as though he had been going to fight a duel. At as early as ten he was equipped, ready for anything, and quite disposed to receive the two visits he expected. He had slept but little, having spent the better part of the night in thinking over the plan by which he wished to trick the Swede. It was simple and easy to execute.

M. de Trémorin would come first; George relied upon telling him in a few words how matters stood, communicating Count Aparanda's propositions, and begging him to go into the parlour where he might hear everything that would be said, and make his appearance at the proper moment. This would induce him, on George refusing the Swede's bribe, to pay Pinchard's note. The crafty speculator felt some doubt, however, as to the baron's consenting to listen to what he was intended to hear. But whether he consented or not, he would not refuse to remain till Aparanda appeared, and this would give Savinien's friend the opportunity of reproaching the rascal in M. de Trémorin's presence for attempting to bribe him, of silencing him if he said any more on the matter, and helping the baron to bring him to terms.

George placed the casket upon the table and turned it about in his hands as he did so. "There are diamonds in this casket of a certainty," muttered he, "and they must be worth a great deal of money. The last time I saw Madame Montauron in her box at the opera, she shone like the sun itself. I remember a necklace and earrings which had stones like hazel-

nuts. She fairly dazzled my eyes. I am not surprised that the rascally Scandinavian should offer me a note of forty-three thousand francs, and even ten thousand more in cash, for his pretended debt to Madame Montauron is a mere trick."

Just at this moment a loud ring was heard at the bell, and made Fougeray start. "There comes the baron," he muttered. "The deuce! He is too early. Savinien wrote to me that he would be here at eleven, and my clock says half past ten. He is just like quicksilver, and I shall never be able to keep him in a humour to wait till noon, especially as he only comes to fetch the casket, and will be too impatient to listen to what I have to say."

On opening the door, however, George was not a little surprised to find himself confronted by Count Aparanda.

"I am punctual, you see," said the latter, in a most engaging manner.

"I beg your pardon," said Fougeray, "true punctuality consists in being neither too early nor too late. You were to come at half past eleven, and not at half past ten."

"That is true; but what does it matter? Your rooms are not a railway station, which one has to reach at a particular moment under penalty of missing the train, and shifting from one foot to the other in a waiting-room."

The important matter now was to make the count remain until the baron came, and not to get the baron to wait till the count appeared. What was to be done? Should he send Aparanda away? The Swede was quite cunning enough to detect some attempt to entrap him if such a course were followed, and would most likely go off and never return for fear of being tricked. If he did return he might meet Savinien's uncle upon the stairs. George was utterly at a loss.

"What ails you, sir?" asked the Swede, who saw his hesitation, and looked frowningly at him. "You seem to hesitate about allowing me to enter. Have you changed your mind? It would be a pity, for I have Pinchard's note in my pocket, and a roll of ten notes of a thousand francs each, and we can end the matter in a minute; while, if you put me off till two Sundays meet, I shall be obliged to let the matter go, as I leave Paris to-day and have but little time remaining to me."

"I have but little time myself," replied George Fougeray. "I am waiting for my broker's clerk. I thought it was he when you rang. I am afraid that we shall be disturbed while we are talking, and for that reason I should have preferred to defer our interview for half-an-hour. However, as you are here, come in. When the clerk comes you must excuse me for five minutes."

"Certainly! Besides, we may have ended our chat before he appears."

"Not so soon as you think, my good fellow," said George to himself. "I'll undertake to make a diversion."

He conducted the Swede into the smoking-room, and, to smooth his ruffled temper, pointed out the precious casket, which was boldly displayed upon the table.

"That is right!" exclaimed Aparanda. "I see that we shall come to terms, and to show you that I am fully disposed to do so, I will begin by telling you that I am satisfied with your word of honour."

"About what?"

"As to the contents of this casket. You cannot open it as you have not got the key, and I will not offend you by breaking the lock in your

presence. I would rather rely upon what you say. Swear to me that this little steel casket is the one which your friend Viscount d'Amaulis confided to you."

"I swear it on my honour, but that is all that I can say about it. It was given to me closed, as now: I show it to you as I received it, and I don't know whether there are letters or valuables inside."

"Letters, nothing but letters," said the Swede eagerly.

"You assert it, and I cannot dispute your word, but I am not obliged to believe it."

"What do you mean, sir? Do you doubt it? It seems to me that I am the person who ought to doubt, as I never saw Madame Montauron's casket in which my correspondence was kept, and there is nothing to show me that some other coffer may not have been placed here instead of it."

"There is nothing to prove to me that this one is not full of bank-notes or cheques payable to bearer. If that were the case, you would be doing a fine stroke of business by getting it for forty-three or fifty-three thousand francs. It isn't very large, but a million might be inside."

Aparanda started. He had not expected this objection. He immediately began to think that Fougeray knew more than he wished to tell, and was trying to obtain a higher price for his treason. At the same time he felt that he must put a bold face upon the matter and brave it out. "You have a strange opinion of me, sir," said he, in an offended tone. "By speaking like that, you force me to say that your good faith is not above suspicion any more than mine, and that I am disbursing a very large sum to buy, as the saying goes, 'a cat in a bag.' However, if you choose to place the conversation upon this footing, it is useless to prolong it. Keep the casket; I will retain my liberty, and the power to act as I please with Madame Montauron's letters. Good-day, sir, since this is all you have to say."

"You misunderstand me," replied George Fougeray, who, while he had not the slightest intention of favouring Aparanda's purpose, still wished to detain him till M. de Trémorin arrived. "If I make this objection, it is because I wish to prove to you that I am able to look at both sides of the question. You have, it is evident, a great interest in taking away this casket. That is sufficient to give me the right to lay down my conditions before giving it up to you. But I have no cause to trouble myself as to whether it contains a fortune or only some love-letters."

"That is better," replied Aparanda, smiling with pleasure. "I thought, for a moment, that we were about to quarrel. Our conditions were all made last night. We have only to fulfil them."

"The first of all is to restore Madame Montauron's letters to me."

"I have brought them; but here, before everything, is your note, with the ten thousand francs which I owe to the lady."

As he spoke, the Swede drew the note and the money from his pocket, and laid both upon the table.

"Be good enough to look at the promissory note," said he. "It is receipted, you see, and I beg you to count over the bank notes also."

George had only to stretch out his hand to take up both the note and the money. But he did not for a moment contemplate doing so.

"Let us begin at the beginning," said he firmly. "Give me the letters."

"They are here," replied the count, holding out a small packet tied with a blue ribbon.

The packet looked like a collection of love-letters. The paper was fine, with a penetrating perfume, and the handwriting was evidently that of a woman. George took it and began to examine it, in order to find a fresh pretext for delay.

"Open one—any one—and look at the name signed to it," said Aparanda.

"The signature is the Christian name—Aurélie," muttered Fougeray, as he did so.

"Well, you are doubtless aware that before her marriage Madame Montauron was called Mademoiselle Aurélie de Louvigné."

"I beg your pardon. I never knew her first name."

"Ask your friend, Monsieur d'Amaulis; he will tell you as I do. Now that I have kept all my promises, there is nothing, I presume, to stand in the way of my taking away this casket?"

The hands of the clock now pointed to five minutes to eleven. Five minutes more must be gained. It was probable that M. de Trémorin, having formerly served in the navy, would be very exact as to time, like most officers are. George was trying to invent a fresh pretext for delay as he turned over the letters.

"However," said he, "I do not know Madame Montauron's handwriting. What is there to prove that these letters were written by her?"

"Read them, and when you have read them you will entertain no further doubt. She talks of nothing but her husband, and occasionally of Monsieur de Trémorin."

"Read a lady's letters to her lover! What do you take me for, sir?"

"Come, sir, I am really beginning to think that you are making game of me with all these difficulties? You know very well I have not fabricated this correspondence, and you cannot, I presume, mean to keep me here till Madame Montauron has read, numbered, and commented upon her letters?"

"No, but I should like to be sure that all the letters are here."

"In other words, you suspect me of having kept some of them back in order to make a bad use of them. Truly, these scruples come rather late in the day, and if you will take the trouble to reason a little, you will see that they lack common sense. You must realise that I have but one wish, which is to take away this casket. When once I have it I shall not bother myself about annoying a woman whom I shall never see again in my life, as I am going to leave France, never to return."

George did not take the trouble to reply to this argument. His eyes followed the hands of the clock, and he thought they moved very slowly.

"I begin to think that you don't intend to conclude the matter," said the Swede, angrily; "and as I have no time to lose in talking, be kind enough to hand me back my packet of letters."

At this moment the clock struck eleven, and a ring at the bell announced a visitor.

"At last!" exclaimed George, looking up.

"What is that?" eagerly demanded Aparanda.

"The clerk whom I was waiting for. I must see him; there is no help for it, but he will only stay here a moment. Don't go, I beg of you. I will return immediately, and this time we will conclude matters, I promise you."

"So be it! but don't be long. I give you three minutes."

Fougeray hastily left the room. He left the casket near Aparanda,

but it was too large to be easily carried off, and as an extra precaution George had been careful to lock all the doors, so that there was no exit left by which the ante-room could be reached.

It was Baron de Trémorin who had rung. He had arrived at the exact hour and moment, and was buttoned up to the chin in a black overcoat. His hat was pulled down over his eyes, and his look was surly. The smiling welcome of George Fougeray did not make him any more pleasant, and he began with these somewhat abrupt words: "My nephew told you that I was coming. I have called for the casket which he left in your hands, and I beg of you to give it to me at once, as I am in a hurry."

"Come in, baron," said George, bowing respectfully. M. de Trémorin did so, but stopped as soon as he had crossed the threshold, and did not seem disposed to advance another step. This did not suit Fougeray, who had now decided on fresh tactics.

"The casket is ready, baron," said he, unlocking a door, "but as there is some one here whom I am about to send away, I must ask you to wait for a few moments in my reception-room."

"Very well, but be quick," replied Savinien's uncle. And with this he suffered himself to be shown into the chamber adjoining the smoking-room. George pointed to an arm-chair, and passed on to the apartment in which he had left Aparanda, and all this without adding a word. He had his reasons for not speaking further, and for leaving the door between the two rooms ajar.

"Here I am," said he to the Swede. "You see that I have made haste."

"You have been quick and cautious," muttered Aparanda. "You took care to lock me in. But I have no time to tell you what I think of your proceedings. Let us end this, pray! Take your note and your money. Keep the letters, and give me the casket. Open the door and let me go, and let us see each other no more."

"I hope, indeed, that we shall see no more of each other," replied George, raising his voice so as to be heard by M. de Trémorin. "But we have not come to the point that you think we have reached. I don't want your money, and you may take away the note that I had the folly to give to a money-lender, and which my friend Monsieur d'Amaulis kindly endorsed in order to assist me."

"What! you won't have it? Are you going to begin acting again? I do not believe in your disinterestedness, and I tell you so!"

"You are free to believe as you please. You thought me vile enough to sell to you a casket that did not belong to me. You were mistaken, and you are so now. Let me tell you that I would not let you have it for a million."

"You were making game of me, then?"

"Perhaps so."

"And you think the matter will stop there?"

"Oh, I am not afraid of you. I know that you are not a fighting man. Even if you were, you have every reason for avoiding a duel; as you are situated, you must be very anxious to get out of France. It isn't a good thing for you to be here."

Aparanda started. George, without knowing it, had found a weak place in his enemy's armour, and he saw him turn pale.

"Yes," said he, raising his voice still more, "I should advise you to

cross the frontiers as soon as you can. Black-mail is punishable by our laws, and so is cheating at cards. You have nothing to gain and everything to lose by staying in Paris."

"Very well, sir," replied the Swede, putting the note and money back into his pockets. "You will repent having misled me. Madame Montauron will curse you, for I shall not spare her. Give me back her letters!"

"Never, while I live!"

"Ah! this is too much! We shall see!"

"I have them and shall keep them."

"Ah! I begin to understand why you made me come here. It is an ambush!"

"I did not make you come here at all. You asked me to allow you to come, in the hope of concluding the infamous bargain which you proposed to me. I accepted, because I wished to deprive you of the power of doing any harm, by taking from you these letters which you would have made a bad use of. Everything has worked as I wished. I have nothing more to say to you, and you can go."

"Take care!" exclaimed Aparanda, who was livid with rage; "you forget that we are alone, and if you provoke me too far——"

"You will murder me? That is what you mean, is it? Try it!"

"For the last time will you give me the letters or the casket?"

"No; a thousand times no!"

"Then, wretch! you shall die!" cried the Swede, drawing a short, but extremely sharp stiletto from the pocket in which he had placed the money a moment before. Fougeray made a bound which brought him to the door of the reception-room. At the same moment M. de Trémorin appeared with a large revolver in his hand, which was levelled at Aparanda.

"Lay that knife upon that table," said he, coldly; "lay it there at once, or I will kill you like a dog!"

Aparanda uttered a cry of rage and took a step forward, but he saw at once that the contest, if he were mad enough to engage in one, would be unequal, for his stiletto was of little avail against the revolver with which the baron, who knew him of old, had been wise enough to provide himself. A knife is no match for a six-chambered revolver.

"I thought so. It is an ambush!" said the Scandinavian, throwing his dagger upon the table. Then, crossing his arms upon his chest, and looking at M. de Trémorin, he resumed: "Now, sir, what do you want with me?"

"You know perfectly well what I want," replied the baron, without any signs of emotion. "You know me, I presume?"

"Yes, and from you I can expect anything."

"It is for that reason you have attempted to steal this casket before the hour at which you were to meet me at the club."

"Steal it? No. I wished to buy it. This gentleman was quite ready to sell it it to me, and only changed his mind when you arrived."

"That is false!" exclaimed George Fougeray. "I expected Monsieur de Trémorin, and if I pretended to listen to you, it was only so that I might keep you here till he came."

"Let me speak, sir," said Savinien's uncle. "You can reply when I question you." Then, addressing Aparanda, he added: "You are aware what this casket contains?"

"Letters and papers which I wish to have restored to me," replied the Swede, with the utmost audacity.

"You lie! and I will prove it."

With this the baron drew a small key from his pocket and opened the casket. There was a dazzling display of superb diamonds.

"There are more than two hundred thousand francs' worth of jewels here," resumed M. de Trémorin. "How much did this man offer you?" said he to George.

"He offered me a note which I had signed," stammered George.

"And which my nephew endorsed. I heard that, and I heard you refuse. You did right. The bargain would have been all in this man's favour, and he cannot now deny his fraudulent intentions. It was a swindle, and a daring one."

"Madame Montauron's letters are worth all that," said the Swede, shrugging his shoulders.

"Perhaps so. Monsieur Fougeray will give them to me, and I will answer the remark presently."

George, delighted by the turn which matters had taken, at once held out the packet to M. de Trémorin, who took it, closed the casket, and began to count the letters one by one.

"There are three missing," said he.

"I was sure of it!" exclaimed George.

"No matter. I will settle the matter with this man. Be good enough to leave us now. Take away that knife, and return into your bed-room. If I am not mistaken, it is separated from the apartment where we now are by another room."

"Where you were a minute ago. Yes, baron."

"Very well. I will call you when I have done with this man. But be good enough to open the door which you have locked. I am here to watch over the diamonds."

George had put the key in his pocket after locking the door upon Aparanda, but he now did as the baron requested, and discreetly withdrew.

"Let us finish this business," said M. de Trémorin to Aparanda.

"What do you want of me?" asked the Swede, recovering his composure. "Your accomplice has managed to possess himself of Madame Montauron's letters, and if I asked you to return them to me you would reply with your revolver. So I yield to force and relinquish them."

"What did you intend to do with them, eh? You wished to use them, no doubt, as weapons against a woman whom you treacherously deceived. Moreover, you have kept back three of the missives, so that the pretended sale was but a piece of trickery after all."

"I acted wisely, for I am not at your mercy now."

"Suppose I were willing to buy the three remaining letters?"

"Ah!" replied Aparanda with sparkling eyes.

"What amount do you want for them?"

"I want the same price as I asked for the whole packet. A single one of these notes would suffice to ruin Madame Montauron, if I chose to send it to her husband. Besides, I have kept back the ones which would be most likely to injure her."

"I dare say," said the baron, contemptuously. "You believe, then, that they are worth as much as the diamonds in this casket?"

"Yes, fully as much."

"That is to say two hundred thousand francs?"

"Well, that is a small amount compared with Monsieur Montauron's large fortune."

"Never mind, I didn't come here to bargain."

"Nor I, and the matter can be settled as soon as you please."

"I'll settle it as soon as you restore the child."

"The child!" ejaculated Aparanda, who was evidently very much disturbed.

"Yes," resumed the baron, "the child you abducted, but whom you offered to restore to her mother——"

"On certain conditions."

"I know what they are. You engaged to restore the child and the letters for two hundred thousand francs. I have the letters, less three. These three must now be forthcoming, and the child as well."

"And then you will give me the diamonds?"

"No; they don't belong to me, but I will hand you a cheque for two hundred thousand francs on the Provincial Bank."

Aparanda shrugged his shoulders.

"If you doubt its being paid you can make inquiries of Monsieur Bouret, for instance. He will tell you that a larger sum than that stands in my favour on his books."

"Excuse me, but that is Montauron's bank, and I fear——"

"What! aren't you a depositor there yourself? You hired one of the compartments in the vault, and placed a large chest in it. My nephew saw you do so; so you are well acquainted with the establishment. However, if you prefer to receive cash it is all the same to me. I merely spoke of a cheque because I have my cheque-book with me, and we might have settled the matter this very day."

"So you will give me this money when I hand you the three missing letters, and tell you where Madame Montauron's daughter is to be found?"

"That isn't quite the thing. You must conduct me to the child. That can be easily managed, if she is in the suburbs of Paris, as you told Monsieur d'Amaulis, and it won't take you long to go there. You must show her to me, and give orders in my presence, so that I may take her away with me. I shall take charge of her, at her mother's request, and bring her up. We will afterwards go to your lodgings together to fetch the letters, and then I will hand you the money."

"But what is there to prove," exclaimed the Swede, "that you will keep your word when once the child is in your power?"

"I should make any other man pay for such an insolent question. But with you I will merely say that you will still hold the three letters which you are not called upon to relinquish until I give you the money."

A spell of silence followed. Aparanda was reflecting; trying to devise some means of obtaining the money without carrying out the baron's conditions. As M. de Trémorin had never seen Madame Montauron's daughter, some child, skilfully taught to play a part, might perhaps be palmed off on him. Aparanda was acquainted with women who, for money, would join him in carrying out some such scheme. He had reached this point in his reflections when the baron remarked, "I forgot to add that Brigitte will accompany us when we go for the girl. She knows her well, and I must have her there to prevent any mistake."

Aparanda turned ghastly pale. His features contracted, and the blood fled even from his lips. He divined that the game was as good as lost.

"I won't see that woman!" he angrily retorted. "She insulted me, and I forbade her showing herself in my presence."

"That is a paltry excuse. You had better acknowledge that you refuse to accept the arrangement I propose."

"It doesn't suit me, and I won't prolong this talk. Keep your money and the letters which Monsieur Fougeray so skilfully appropriated, and I will resume my liberty of action."

"That means that you are going to betray Madame Montauron to her husband, and take her daughter abroad?"

"I am not compelled to answer you."

"Have a care, please. You perhaps fancy that the fear of compromising Madame Montauron will deter me from applying for the help of the legal authorities. In that case you are greatly mistaken. I will prove that you have sequestrated a child, which is a very serious offence, and that you have attempted to levy black-mail, which is almost as bad. You will perhaps say that you are the girl's father; but that won't prevent the authorities from asking what has become of her, and you will have to produce her, if only to prove that you haven't murdered her!"

Aparanda recoiled and replied, "I protest against such an abominable charge."

"I don't accuse you. I even believe that the girl is alive, for you can have had no motive for getting rid of her. Indeed, you rely upon her to extort money from her mother. But I repeat that you will be compelled to bring her before the magistrate who will conduct the inquiry, and, as you have no legal claim on her, she will not be left in your power. Believe me, it will be better for you to give her up, and take the two hundred thousand francs."

Aparanda, instead of replying, drew stealthily towards the door.

"Do you think of running off?" asked the baron. "You may as well give up the attempt. You shan't leave this room without my permission. I will admit that I mean to keep you here. Monsieur Fougeray will stand guard over you while I go to enter my complaint, and you will have to repair to the commissary's office this very day. I shall not spare you in the slightest degree. Everything you have done since your arrival in Paris will be closely investigated. Your life will be thoroughly sifted, and you will be asked what your means have been during the last fifteen years. If you give a truthful reply, and say you have been very lucky at cards, I shall bring forward witnesses who will prove how your luck was brought about."

"Enough!" replied the Swede, assuming the manner of a man who has taken a sudden resolution. "Your threats are idle ones, for I have no thought of escape, and I don't refuse to tell you where Madame Montauron's daughter is. If I hesitated about doing so at first it was because I fancied you would not believe me. But, to finish the matter, I now reply that, to find the child, you and Brigitte have merely to go to Marseilles."

"To Marseilles? What does that mean?"

"Yes, to Marseilles. The little one is there in the charge of a very respectable woman, who keeps a boarding-house, No. 99 Rue de la Darse. If you doubt my word, look at this letter which she wrote to me three days ago. Read it, and you will speedily be convinced of the truth of what I state."

With a frown M. de Trémorin took hold of the letter handed to him by the Swede. The envelope bore the Marseilles post mark, and the missive

itself, a short one, signed by a woman, stated that the young girl was quite well. The woman from whom the letter appeared to come expressed a wish to hear from Aparanda, and said that the young lady was also anxious to receive a letter. All this was not quite clear, but it was scarcely to be supposed that the Swede had prepared this document for his own justification, for he could not have foreseen that the interview would take its present turn. "So you were deceiving my nephew," said M. de Trémorin, "when you told him that the girl was in the suburbs near by? What was your motive in doing that?"

"I did not wish to confide all my secrets to him, and I was right in following the course I chose, as you now threaten me with the legal authorities. I don't yield to your threats, mind, but at the point we have now reached I have nothing further to conceal from you. Go to Marseilles if you choose. I will write a letter to Madame Féréol, the boarding housekeeper, authorising her to place Madame Montauron's daughter in your hands. You can take this letter with you, and secure Brigitte as a companion. As the child knows her, she will go away with her willingly enough."

"And will you come to Marseilles as well?"

"No. I have already informed you that I don't care to find myself with that insolent creature, Brigitte. I shall remain in Paris until you return."

"What is there to show that you won't abscond during my absence?"

"I should be mad to do that. I take your word, and I believe that on your return you will bring me the two hundred thousand francs which I have no wish to lose. In addition, it is understood that I shall hand you the three letters I have kept back in exchange for the money."

All this was said so calmly and naturally that M. de Trémorin believed that the scamp before him was speaking the truth. It was evidently Aparanda's interest to remain in Paris to receive the price of his rascality. As on his arrival he had stated that he came from Italy, he might very well have passed through Marseilles and have left the girl there. Had she been in Paris she would have interfered with the shameless life he led.

The baron abruptly made up his mind. "Well, where do you live?" he asked. "It seems that you make a show of living at the Grand Hôtel, but really reside at some other place."

"Will you accompany me to the Boulevard des Capucines. It is only two steps from here. If you will go up to the third floor of the hotel you will find that I there occupy room No. 197," replied Aparanda, with perfect composure."

"Well, I agree to that, and I warn you that I shall question the servants."

"That's what I desire."

"And I also warn you that I shall have you watched."

"As you please."

"Very well. I shall start this evening by the express so that I shall reach Marseilles to-morrow. A few hours will suffice for me to settle matters with this Madame Féréol. I shall take the express again in the evening, and, by Wednesday at 10 o'clock, I shall be in Paris again. I will call on you at your hotel at noon."

"You will find me waiting for you, baron," rejoined Aparanda.

"Then come along," rejoined M. de Trémorin, taking the casket under his arm.

Aparanda made no further difficulty, and they went off without troubling

themselves about George Fougeray, who was waiting in his bedroom for the baron to summon him. He waited a long time, and when fairly tired out he at last ventured to peep into the smoking-room he was annoyed to find that there was no one there. Savinien's uncle had gone off without in any way expressing his intentions respecting money matters, and thus had fled poor George's last hope of being able to meet the promissory note.

XI.

THE terrible pay-day had come at last, and Savinien d'Amaulis was awaiting the huissier's ring like a condemned felon awaits the executioner—listening to every sound, and his terror the keener as he did not in the least know what kind of measures would be taken. He had no doubt studied the code in the days when he was a law student, but he had long since forgotten it. He had forgotten, also, that before coming to a protest the note must first of all be presented, and that no one had as yet appeared to apply for payment. He also forgot that the money-lender would, in the first instance, apply to George Fougeray, who had signed the note, whereas he, Savinien, had but endorsed it. The suspense seemed unbearable to the viscount, who remained without breakfast, as he was afraid to absent himself from home. He entertained a vague hope that Pinchard would propose some arrangement at the last moment.

He no longer relied upon George, whom he had vainly searched for on the evening before. Fougeray was not to be found, and his disappearance was ample proof that he was not able to meet his engagement. Savinien had also other grounds for anxiety. For a couple of days he had not seen either his uncle or his cousin. On calling at the Rue du Helder hotel on Monday afternoon he had been given a note from M. de Trémorin to the following effect:

"I leave Paris this evening, but shall probably be back again by the day after to-morrow. I need not tell you where I am going. You can guess the object of my journey, as I have just had an interview with a scoundrel of your acquaintance. He wanted to make off, but I mastered him, and I don't yet despair of bringing this terrible business to a satisfactory conclusion. I have taken possession of the diamonds, and restored them to a person whose name you can guess. The rest will follow, and I shall perhaps manage to save her. It will cost me no little money, but I shan't regret it if I can only restore peace to her household. I have left Yvonne in Paris in the charge of Madame de Loudinières, and I beg of you not to try to see her during my absence. On my return to Paris my first visit will be for you, and I will then explain to you various matters which I don't care to confide to paper. I will just add, however, that I don't quite understand the part played by your friend Fougeray, as regards the Swede, though he certainly rendered me a signal service."

This note was not of a kind to set Savinien at his ease. It was couched in a familiar style, no doubt, but M. de Trémorin had simply appended his name without the usual formula, "your uncle and friend." The fact that Yvonne had been entrusted to the care of match-making Madame de Loudinières also seemed fraught with ill omen to the viscount. He could, not, however, disobey the baron's order to remain aloof, and had to restrain his impatience pending the visit which would finally decide his future.

Meanwhile time was passing, and no one came with the promissory

note. It was very sultry weather, and Savinien wandered about his rooms like a soul in distress. He had left the glass door open to allow fresh air to enter freely, and at about four o'clock he perceived some one approaching outside. Rising up, half hoping that the new comer was his uncle, half fearing that he was a lawyer with instructions to protest the bill, he reached the threshold, and was agreeably surprised to see M. Pinchard, whom he at once invited to walk in. He fancied that he would be easily able to come to an understanding with the fashionable usurer.

"You know what brings me here," said Pinchard, without the slightest ceremony; "Fougeray is dead broke, and it is even said that he has absconded. So I have come to ask if you can pay the bill."

"Not to-day," replied Savinien in embarrassment. "However, I am going to sell a piece of land on which you can take a mortgage until it finds a purchaser."

"I'll take the mortgage, but I shall place the note in my lawyer's hands with instructions to push the matter; for I have no intention of sparing you. You have acted very lightly with me, viscount, and I intend to make you pay for it."

"As you choose; but your way of speaking doesn't please me, so you will pray leave the room at once"

The usurer's behaviour had fairly exasperated Amaulis, and a violent scene seemed likely to occur. However, Pinchard thought it advisable to change his tone. "I was wrong to get angry," said he; "but why on earth did your friend Fougeray refuse Count Aparanda's offer?"

"What offer?" asked Savinien. "And how does it happen that Aparanda is mixed up in this affair?"

"Come, come, viscount, I'm not a child," replied Pinchard. "Fougeray must surely have informed you of what has been going on. The Swede offered to return him the note you endorsed, on certain conditions, which might easily have been carried out."

"How does it happen that the note left your safe?"

"Oh, it was simple enough. Aparanda had some funds with me. I must tell you that I have known him for a long time, and that we did a deal of business together some twelve years or so ago. Last Monday morning he came to me to fetch his money, as he had warned me he would do, and asked me if I would let him have Fougeray's note as part of the amount I owed him. He mentioned that he had a few matters to settle with your friend. I guessed there was some woman mixed up in the story, for he told me he would return me the note if he didn't succeed in what he had in view. I risked nothing, as the count left me the amount of the note, and I was delighted at being paid before date. Unfortunately, however, Fougeray and Aparanda didn't come to terms. Fougeray declined to accept the note in exchange for some papers which had been confided to him. So Aparanda brought me back the note, and took his money in lieu of it. I had to give him the amount, as we had an agreement to that effect; and, besides, he was in a great hurry, as he meant to leave France for good that very night."

"What! the scamp has absconded?" cried Savinien.

"Yes; and I don't believe we shall ever see him again. But to come to the point, viscount, you owe me the money, and it is absolutely necessary that I should be paid. As Fougeray is insolvent, I can only rely on you; and if you can't meet the note—well, I shall have to take legal proceedings against you. I shall no doubt have to put an execution in here,

and yet it seems to me that you might spare me this painful task. Your uncle, who is very rich, won't leave you in the lurch if you apply to him. Come, shall I go and see him?"

"No! no! never!" exclaimed Savinien. "I shan't ask him for a copper even if you ruin me with costs. I have made a mistake and must bear the consequences. Besides, I would never bring Baron de Trémorin into connection with a man like you."

"A man like me is as good as any one else, and even better than a gentleman who doesn't pay his debts."

The viscount, pale with rage, was about to seize hold of Pinchard by the neck and summarily eject him when the door curtain was abruptly drawn aside, and M. de Trémorin appeared upon the threshold. Without replying to his nephew's exclamations of amazement, he walked straight towards Pinchard, and said—"I am the Baron de Trémorin, and I will pay you."

"Now and here?" asked the usurer.

"The money will be at your house in an hour's time."

"If I don't receive it by noon to-morrow you will have to settle with my lawyer."

"Leave the room, unless you want me to throw you out." And the baron punctuated this advice with a look which induced Pinchard to immediately retire.

"What! you were there, uncle, and you heard everything?" ejaculated Amaulis.

"Everything," answered the baron, "and I don't regret having listened at the door which you had left open. I learned that I had been suspecting an innocent man."

"Do you mean me?"

"No. I refer to your friend, Fougeray, whose behaviour had seemed very strange to me. I now realise, however, that he really declined Aparanda's offers. The count wanted to bribe him and secure possession of the casket. And I also realise that you, yourself, have been more imprudent than guilty."

"Then you forgive me?" said Savinien timidly, "and I may hope——"

"Well, do you know where I have been?" interrupted his uncle; "I have been to Marseilles and back. It was Aparanda who sent me there. The rascal pretended that Madame Montauron's daughter was there, and I went on a fool's errand. I only found an old woman who had charge of one of his victims—a poor girl whom he had met at Monaco, and abandoned at Marseilles. They both told me that the child had really been brought to Paris. What can he have done with her? And where has he gone? He evaded the man I left to watch him. It is strange he should have relinquished the two hundred thousand francs. However, Madame Montauron now has her diamonds, and the greater part of her letters——"

"The three which Aparanda has detained will suffice to ruin her," suggested Savinien.

"I can't help it. As I told Brigitte, I am now going back to Plouër. However, I will leave Madame Montauron a cheque for two hundred thousand francs in case Aparanda writes to her and offers to give up the child and letters. But let us talk about yourself, Savinien. You must have been crazy when you endorsed that note,"

"I only did so to save a friend from ruin."

"No doubt. It was grand but foolish. You risked a deal more tha Fougeray did—he hasn't much to lose; while you—Why, do you know, tha if I had learned some fine morning that you had given a mortgage on yo land I should have concluded that you had been leading a fast life? and need not say what the result of such a conviction on my part would hav been."

"But now you don't think anything of the kind?" said Savinien, wh was greatly agitated.

"No. I know what to think. You never have been anything but good fellow, and have only erred through hastiness and excess generosity. There is nobody now who accuses you but Monsieur Mon tauron."

"Monsieur Montauron!"

"Yes, indeed. It seems that on the day of the Grand Prize, he ha paid somebody to follow his wife. She was seen coming to my hote Montauron, from the report he received, has concluded that I favour a intrigue between his wife and you. I shan't take the trouble to undeceiv him, and I hardly think that he will come to me to complain; but th least that will happen to poor Aurélie will be a separation by mutual con sent. Between ourselves, she deserves this, for, by keeping back th truth, she is the cause of my formerly deceiving a worthy man. I sha not allow Yvonne to visit her again. She shall never meet her again—I answer for that."

"But I, uncle, I have deceived no one."

"You! That is another thing, and I may as well admit——Bu some one is coming here by the gate between your garden and Montauron park."

M. de Trémorin had not closed the curtains on his arrival, and he an his nephew could now see Brigitte coming toward them with consterna tion on her countenance. It was easy to see that she was the bearer bad news.

"What is the matter?" asked M. de Trémorin.

"He is dead!" said Brigitte, in a hoarse voice.

"Who is dead?"

"Monsieur Montauron. The scoundrel has killed him!"

"Aparanda! What! he has had the audacity to reappear and ki Montauron?"

"No; he has not returned."

"Then explain yourself, if you please, or I shall think that you hav lost your senses."

"I was with my mistress who was weeping bitterly—for she under stood that she would never see her child again—when her husban suddenly entered, holding some letters in his hand. He flung them upo the table, and said to her: 'You were this man's mistress, don't attemp to deny it!' She fell on her knees, and he began once more: 'See! h still has the audacity to write to you; open this note addressed to you and tell me where the child is which you had by him.' She then exclaimed 'Have pity upon me!' He raised his arm, and I rushed forward to pre vent him from striking her, but he suddenly tottered and fell heavily upo the floor."

"And did not rise again?" said the baron, who was much affected "Apoplexy! and it killed him at once! You are right; it was indee

Aparanda who caused his death by sending him his wife's letters. Ah! he infamous rascal! I ought to have strangled him when I had him in my power! Tell me something more about poor Montauron."

"The physician said that he did not live thirty seconds after he fell, and his wife is dying, to all appearance. I knew that you must be with Monsieur d'Amaulis, and I wished to give you this letter, written by that man to her; she has not read it, for she fainted away. I must hasten back to her. To-morrow you can tell me if I am to inform her of the fresh misfortune which it mentions."

Brigitte then handed the baron the letter which she held in her hand, and went hurriedly away. M. de Trémorin was so completely overcome that he did not attempt to detain her. "What do you say to this?" he asked his nephew.

"It is terrible!" replied Savinien.

"Ah! poor, unhappy woman! I cannot but accuse her, and if she has to follow her husband to the other world, I shall not pity her, for she has done much harm in this. If Aurélie had had a good mother, like your cousin Yvonne, she would not have fallen into this abyss, and even now she has not seen the end of her woes. What will become of her and her daughter now?"

"Her daughter! Who knows? Brigitte spoke just now of a fresh misfortune."

"True! I remember, now that you remind me, that she left this letter; it speaks about the child, perhaps." And the baron read aloud: "Do not search for our daughter. She is dead.'

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Monsieur de Trémorin, "can the monster have killed her?"

"I don't doubt it," began Savinien, "for I saw——"

"'She died,'" interrupted the baron, reading the letter, "'a short time after we arrived in Paris. I brought her with me, and had made up my mind to hand her over to you. A sudden illness, however, carried her off in a few hours on the day before that on which you were to come to us. I thought of leaving France to avoid having to tell you of this sad event, which I kept a secret from every one. No one saw the child except one woman, who left France on the day after this sad event, which I deplore as much and more than you. I have no reason for sparing you, as you have seen fit to set upon me two men from the provinces who are friends of yours, and who have waged merciless war upon me. I yield to them, and as I cannot revenge myself upon them I will at least punish you for your scorn. Your husband shall know what the noble damsel whom he married amounted to, as well as the worthy gentleman who made the match. When Monsieur Montauron has received what I send him, I shall be safe from his persecution, and from yours. Don't try to find out what has become of me. You will never succeed in doing so. Be content with knowing that you will never hear of me again. And do not ask where the body of our daughter lies. You forsook her from her birth. Now that she is dead you need not know where she is, and you will never know it.

"But I know!" cried Savinien.

"What! What do you say?" cried his uncle in amazement.

D'Amaulis now related what he had seen and heard: the hammering at night time on the floor above him at the hotel; the early departure of the count, followed by the porter carrying the chest on his back, and the meeting in the vaults of the Provincial Bank. "I tell you that he murdered

her," he added, "and placed the body in a hiding-place, of which he alo has the key."

"If that be true this man is the most abominable scoundrel that ev lived," said M. de Trémorin. "To choose the vaults of Montauron's ban as the sepulchre of Madame Montauron's child, this is an unheard-of refin ment of wickedness."

"And the most skilful calculation that can be imagined," rejoine Savinien. "The monster felt sure enough that the poor body would nev be discovered. The deposits made in these vaults are inviolable. No o has a right to touch them, not even the director of the bank."

"For a certain time, no doubt," rejoined the baron. "But if the deposit does not turn up at the end of a certain number of years, the compartme must be opened, if only to let it to some one else. Besides, I need on denounce this murderer."

"If you do so, uncle, you will complete Madame Montauron's rui Don't you think that she has suffered enough?"

"That is true. I had not thought of that," muttered M. de Trémori "If I told a police officer the story of this strange deposit he would as me how I knew of it. I should be obliged to tell him, and little by litt I should have to reveal what concerns Madame Montauron. You are righ It is better to be quiet about it. And yet our silence will admit of th wretch's going free."

"Going free? He is already free. If he writes as he does it is becau he is in safety. All his measures have been taken. He has, no doub sailed under a false name for China or Australia. He would not be fou again. And, if a search were made for him, Madame Montauron wou die of shame and grief. She does not know that her daughter is dead, she has not read this infamous letter. Why inform her of this new sorrow Brigitte has just told you that she did not dare to take upon herself to te her of it until she had consulted you."

"Well, then, after thinking it over, I advise Brigitte to keep it a secr and we will try to forget it also. It won't be hard to do so, as we are goi back to Plouër. Country life is a sovereign cure for mental anxieties."

"We are going back!—you said *we*. Shall you take me back with you"

"Do you suppose that I intend condemning you to become a perpetu Parisian? No! no! I am not so insane! This part of the world is not healthy one for you. You would meet with other Fougerays, other foreig counts, and other guilty mothers, and you might not get out of the scra so well. It is all very nice to travel but never linger on dangerous sea Your wanderings are over, my lad. Come back to port, and stay at hon if you mean to be happy."

"Happy!" cried Savinien. "My happiness depends upon you."

"Good! I understand! And I reply that it depends upon yourse I wipe out the past, and the trial I demanded shall be completed Brittany. It must last six months. At Christmas, then, your cousin sha decide your fate. I shall not attempt to influence her. If she wishes marry you she will say so. If, on the contrary, she thinks that you w make but a poor sort of husband; or if, while she stays in Paris, oth views become hers, you must seek elsewhere—unless you think of remai ing single to the end of your days."

"Uncle, you frighten me! Yvonne has been spending two days wi Madame de Loudinières, who must have profited by this chance to intr duce all the marrying men she knows to her."

"Be at ease as to that. Yvonne has not stirred from the hotel. I wrote o you that I should send her to our relative, because I did not want to ıave you prowling about under her windows day and night. But, in point f fact, I left her with the worthy landlord and his wife."

"I shall see her soon, then?"

"Sooner than you suppose. She is waiting for me in a cab at the door. did not wish to bring her, but she begged so hard that I had to give in."

"And you did not tell me of it!"

"I was keeping the surprise for the finish. But before we join that ·oung lady, my daughter, who is not much wiser than you are, I must ecture you a little. It is as well that I should, since you ventured o near the edge of the precipice. You didn't fall over it, but you went oo close to the brink. You must have seen that all these people who so ıearly dragged you over into the abyss have not the same ideal of life as ve have. They only think of growing rich, and from your boyhood you ıave been taught that honour is everything, and money of but little ıccount. Money must be had, no doubt, and it is not forbidden to earn it ›y toil. But money isn't the aim of life, and we did not come into this world to worship the Golden Pig."

"As in my dream!" cried Savinien.

"Yes, as in your dream, as you related it to Yvonne on the day of our ırrival, and it was indeed a prophetic warning to you. A day will come when that idol, falling from its pedestal, will crush our country beneath ts fragments. Then those of us who have not knelt to the false gods will ›nly have to die for invaded France, and we shall know how to die like hose who fell at Patay. Come with me now. Yvonne must be weary ›f waiting in her cab."

Savinien had not a word to say in reply. He was wild with joy, and vas not much more eloquent when he saw his cousin. But lovers do not ıeed to be eloquent.

"My children," said the baron, as they drove along to the Rue du Helder ıotel, "travel forms the mind of youth, but there ought not to be too much ›f it. Before I sent my nephew to Paris I ought to have re-perused the familiar fable of the 'Two Pigeons,' by La Fontaine. Savinien is going back to the dove-cot with a wounded wing and dragging claws, but ıe is returning home for all that, and there I advise him to remain."

"I shall keep him there," said Yvonne, softly.

"I think that he will be quite willing to stay," replied M. de Trémorin, smiling. "He has learned to his cost that true happiness is there in the ›ld manor where he was born, far from meaningless excitement, and in the midst of those whom he loves——"

"And who love him," said Yvonne, slipping her hand into that of Savinien d'Amaulis.

EPILOGUE.

FOUR months have passed over the joys and sorrows of those who figure in his story.

Plouer is the scene of gay doings. The marriage has been hastened. By the end of October Yvonne de Trémorin will be Viscountess d'Amaulis ınd all Brittany will be present at the wedding. The baron has made up ıis mind to withdraw his funds from the Provincial Bank, and to be a

landowner only. With the three millions which are his he will rebuild th château and buy the forest on the border of his estates.

He was obliged to return to Paris to settle his accounts with th banking-house of which M. Bouret had become the director since M Montauron's death. And, during this sad trip, he closed the eyes o Aurélie de Louvigné, who died breathing her daughter's name. Th poor woman never recovered from the blow dealt her by the infamou Aparanda.

A will left by her husband placed her in possession of an immens fortune, which she left to the hospitals for the poor, without forgettin Brigitte, her faithful servant, who had ended by telling her, at last, tha her daughter no longer lived.

George Fougeray, through the baron's generosity, recovered from h misfortunes, and was released from Pinchard's clutches. He afterward made some happy hits at the Bourse, and was able to hold on to his Otto man stock, upon which he relies more than ever, and maybe he will son day become a millionaire like many another. Mademoiselle Fourcas is i the country on a visit to Madame de Chadeuil, and the Marquis de Laffé mas is paying a deal of attention to her. It is thought that he will succee in consoling her for Viscount d'Amaulis's indifference, and, indeed, h flatters himself that he will marry her when the November hunts ar over. But M. Fourcas, who has heard of the brilliant marquis's financia position, is trying to dissuade his niece from marrying him, and he may perhaps, succeed in doing so. The little Countess de Gravigny still con tinues speculating most eagerly. She had a deal of trouble in payin Pinchard, and wishes to recover from her losses. But she is so seldo lucky, and her dressmaker's bills grow larger every day. She will com to sorrow from dancing too long around the Golden Pig.

The Plungers' Club did not trouble itself about Aparanda's disappea ance. He had won too much money to be a favourite; and althoug George Fougeray had said nothing, evil reports as to this foreigner di not fail to get about. For some time there was no news of him, an Anita amused herself by declaring that he had opened a gambling-hous in California, and, in fact, it was rumoured that he had really sailed fo the New World. Recently, however, a newspaper correspondent, writin from Mexico, gave an account of his death. The wretch had perished i a frightful railway accident. He had been a passenger in a train on whic there was a load of petroleum oil, and this train being thrown over th side of a mountain, the petroleum caught fire, and Aparanda was burne alive. It was but just. When M. Bouret, who had quite forgotten th Swedish count, learnt that he had passed out of existence, he remembere that he had been a depositor at the Bank, and had left a certain chest i compartment No. 918. This chest seemed destined to remain there fo ever, as the count left no heirs of whom any one had knowledge. Th case was a new and puzzling one. The compartments were let out by th year, but at the end of a year the managers usually knew whom to appl to, and if the depositor was not to be found, there was always a relativ to claim the deposit. However, Count Aparanda has taken with him int another world the pass-word by which the letters were worked, and is not likely that any one will ever claim the chest in his name.

So, when the year has run out, the director will have to make up h mind on the subject, and if he decides to force the lock, the solution of problem which still troubles the sleep of both M. de Trémorin an

avinien d'Amaulis will be found. Neither the uncle nor the nephew ave ever spoken of the belief they entertain regarding it, and Madame Iontauron died without suspecting that her daughter had perhaps no ther resting-place than a compartment in a vault intended to serve as a afe keeping-place for valuables.

If Savinien is not mistaken in his conjectures, we shall next year have discovery which will set all the police in motion, and furnish any uantity of "copy" to newspaper reporters. Murderers have fallen on rtunate days, for under the Republic they are rarely if ever captured, nd even when apprehended, they are seldom guillotined. Moreover, a oble foreigner has shown them how to get rid of a dead body. But, hen, what an advertisement for the Provincial Bank!

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